My Instant Death Ability Is So Overpowered, No One in This Other World Stands a Chance Against Me!

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Author:
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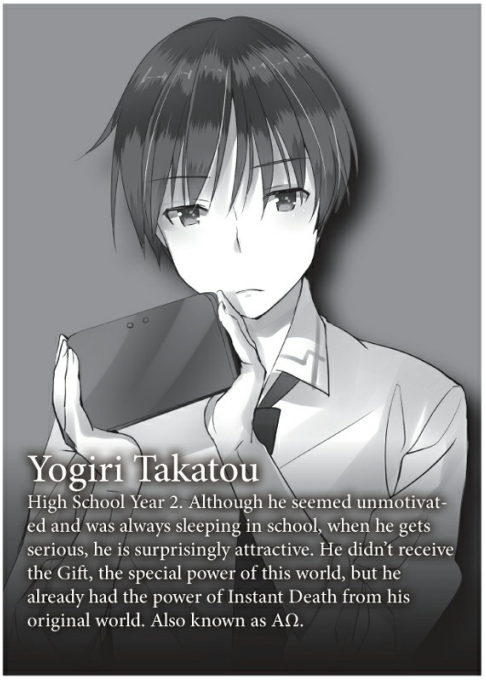
CHARACTERS

Tomochika Dannoura

High School Year 2. Although she looks quite attractive and has quite the ample chest, her role is unfortunately that of the Straight Man. Like Yogiri, she did not receive the power of the Gift, but she is trained in a martial art derived from the ancient Dannoura style of archery.



Yogiri Takatou

High School Year 2. Although he seemed unmotivated and was always sleeping in school, when he gets serious, he is surprisingly attractive. He didn't receive the Gift, the special power of this world, but he already had the power of Instant Death from his original world. Also known as AΩ.

Asaka Takatou

A female college student who, while struggling to find work, ended up taking an interview at a suspicious institution known as the Independent Higher Life Form Research Facility, and unfortunately ended up finding work there. She normally ties her long hair up behind her head. At her new work place, she met AΩ, whom she named Yogiri.

Mokomoko Dannoura

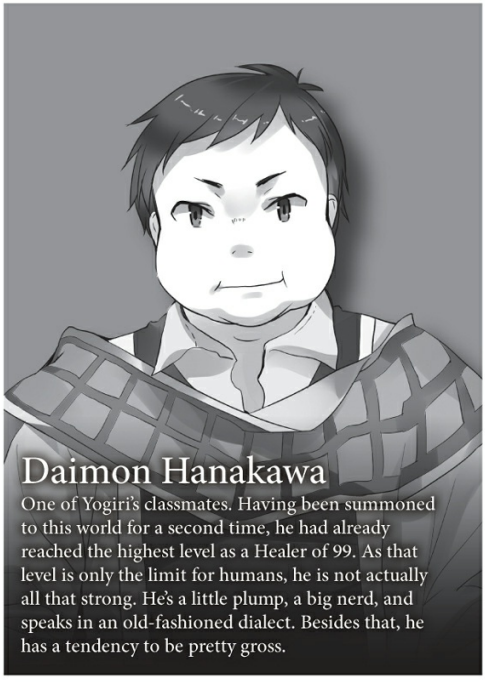
Tomochika's ancestor and guardian spirit. As a ghost from the Heian era, she was the one responsible for reviving the Dannoura School of Archery...or so she says. She looks exactly like Tomochika's older sister (in that she's fat), and wears a kimono in the fashion of the Heian-era nobility. Apparently, she is well acquainted with digital technology.

Ryouko Ninomiya

One of Yogiri's classmates. Actually, she was dispatched by the research facility that had kept Yogiri hidden to watch Yogiri. She has a tool designed to monitor him installed on her smartphone. Though she was a ninja back home, in this world her class is Samurai. She fights in a traditional Samurai's garb with two swords.

Enju Sumeragi

A girl who came to hide at the Independent Higher Order Lifeform Research Institute while Yogiri was living there with Asaka. One of the few people Yogiri grew attached to. For that reason, robots were made with her appearance to combat him. Part of the Sumeragi family, who rule Japan from the shadows.



Daimon Hanakawa

One of Yogiri's classmates. Having been summoned to this world for a second time, he had already reached the highest level as a Healer of 99. As that level is only the limit for humans, he is not actually all that strong. He's a little plump, a big nerd, and speaks in an old-fashioned dialect. Besides that, he has a tendency to be pretty gross.

Carol S. Lane

One of Yogiri's classmates. An American who joined their class as she entered high school. Like Ryouko, she was tasked with monitoring Yogiri, but she works for the Agency. Her class in this world is Ninja, and she wears a red ninja outfit and forehead protector when fighting. Her weapon is a ninja sword.

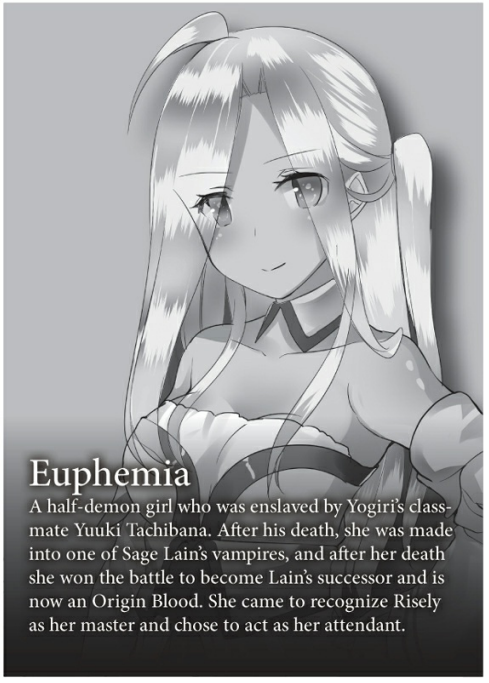
CHARACTERS

Haruto Ootori

One of Yogiri's classmates. Actually a bird beastkin, inheriting generations of inhuman blood. He can grow wings from his back and fly. When most of their classmates were killed in the capital and he was gravely injured, a god named Zakuro rescued him because of those wings, and now Haruto has decided to help him.

Shigeto Mitadera

One of Yogiri's classmates. His class in this world is Master Oracle. He has the ability to read fate, but the power works like a strategy guide, so it can't deal with unexpected situations. He obtained the World Sword Omega Blade, an item capable of defeating the Sages.



Euphemia

A half-demon girl who was enslaved by Yogiri's classmate Yuuki Tachibana. After his death, she was made into one of Sage Lain's vampires, and after her death she won the battle to become Lain's successor and is now an Origin Blood. She came to recognize Risely as her master and chose to act as her attendant.

Risley

The Sage Lain, being the highest level of vampire known as an Origin Blood, challenged Yogiri in hopes he would be able to put an end to her immortality. She died per her wishes and left behind this girl, a replica of herself modified to be her ideal. She only has a small part of Lain's memories.

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ACT 1

Chapter 1 — Treating Me like a Criminal Just Because I Look Gross Isn't Fair!

Yogiri's group was still within the underground ruins at the center of the Elven Forest. It wasn't normally a place where people would be found wandering, but for some reason a large number of travelers had gathered there.

With Yogiri were Tomochika Dannoura, her guardian spirit Mokomoko, and the baby who had just grown into a young girl. They had met Daimon Hanakawa, who they had been separated from earlier, Vivian, the girl with all the shields, and another woman who seemed to be one of Yoshifumi's followers. Ignoring the now dead Yoshifumi, there were seven of them in total.

"Okay! So what do we do now?!"

Tomochika seemed a bit flustered. They had entered the ruins at the insistence of the baby, who had been born from the transformed Philosopher's Stones. Her objective must have been the Philosopher's Stone in Yoshifumi's body. She had acquired what she desired, but the rest of them wanted to get out of the forest. Originally, they had planned to meet up with Yoshifumi and take his Philosopher's Stone, but the baby had already absorbed it. As a result, she had now grown to the size of a three-year-old. Yogiri could fully understand Tomochika's confusion.

"If she can talk, then I guess we should just ask her. Do we keep collecting Philosopher's Stones? I'm not sure there's a point anymore," he said.

They needed a tremendous amount of energy to return to their own world. They had been seeking Philosopher's Stones to use as a source of energy, but now the stones had transformed into a humanoid child, and it wasn't clear whether they could still extract the required energy.

"You should be big enough to walk on your own now," he told the child. "Can I put you down?"

“Yeah,” came a clear response. However, she seemed to be only about as intelligent as her appearance suggested, so it was doubtful that she would be able to answer complicated questions.

“Hold on a second! Uh...we should have something...” Tomochika started hurriedly digging through the backpack. “Hanakawa, look away for a second. We can’t let you see a girl in this condition.”

The kid in Yogiri’s arms was still only wrapped up in a cloth. Her change in size had left her almost naked, so Tomochika was searching for something for her to wear.

“That is quite rude! No matter my feelings towards lolis in general, a child that young is naturally outside of my scope! Speaking of which, why does it not bother you if Sir Takatou sees? Did it not occur to you that he might have impure motives of his own?!”

“Takatou isn’t like that.”

“How do you know?!”

“Uhh...because of how he looks?”

“Dammit!”

Once her preparations were complete, Yogiri handed the child over to Tomochika. Although it was hardly a concern given the child’s age, he turned his back anyway.

“Treating me like a criminal just because I look gross isn’t fair! That will no doubt result in false accusations against me. Such a decision hardly protects children at all. The ones you should actually be on guard against are the seemingly kind older men lurking around the neighborhood, not the gross otaku types.”

Yogiri stepped over beside Hanakawa, who continued mumbling nonsense, apparently upset about the situation.

“We’re done!”

At Tomochika’s declaration, they turned around. The young girl was now wearing a large t-shirt. Made for an adult, on a girl of her size it ended up looking like a long dress. She probably had some sort of underwear on as well.

“Hold on a moment! Things seem to be moving on without me. Can you stop pretending I don’t exist?!” The stunned Vivian finally seemed to have collected her wits.

“I mean, you just happened to be here when we showed up,” Yogiri

replied. “What do you want us to do? You were going to kill Yoshifumi and rebuild your country, right? He’s dead now, so good luck with the rest of it.”

There was nothing they could do to help her with her mission, nor did they feel the need to try. It wouldn’t help them get home, after all.

“That’s true, but...but...you think I can just accept this?!”

“I have fully accepted things!” Hanakawa interjected.

“No one asked you!” Vivian snapped back at him.

“Miss Vivian, in a situation like this, it is best to be carried by the current and not complicate things with unnecessary complaints! Look, even Miss Rena is being quiet.”

The unhealthy looking woman who appeared to be one of Yoshifumi’s subordinates was called Rena. She was staring down at the collapsed Sage. There was no impression of joy at having been set free from her oppression. She seemed stunned, unable to accept the reality of his death.

“What...the hell! Do you have any idea how hard it was for me to make it this far?!” Rena suddenly exploded. “How could *you* die?! Aren’t you invincible? Aren’t you supposed to be stronger than anyone else?! Dammit! I put up with your stupid shit for so long because you were supposed to be able to kill him!”

“Die.”

Rena collapsed. Yogiri had used his power in response to the killing intent coming from her.

“Huh? Uh, is she dead?” Hanakawa asked.

“She lost it and was going to do something dangerous.”

“No, no, no! That sounded like something really important, didn’t it? You should have heard her out and then eventually decided to help her! Or at least let her escape, so she could swear revenge against you, then come back into the story after powering up! Is that not exactly the kind of development this situation calls for?!”

“What are *you* mad for?” Yogiri couldn’t understand why Hanakawa had lost his temper. “Anyway, can we get out of here? This isn’t a great place to sit around and talk.”

“True enough. Spending much longer in such a depressing place will only lead to us becoming depressed ourselves! I believe the brilliant sunlight is most fitting for me!”

The only light they had at the moment was coming from Vivian’s glowing

shield and the ball of light the child had finally managed to create for them. Although it was enough to illuminate the area around them, being otherwise surrounded by darkness was hard to handle. It wasn't a particularly fun place to be hanging out.

"Really? You seem like the type to hole up in a dark room somewhere and watch anime for days on end." Tomochika remarked, legitimately curious about his statement.

"What an awful stereotype! Believe it or not, I am actually the outdoor type! The kind to travel on pilgrimages!"

"If we're going outside, I guess we should go back the way we came. How did you guys get in here, Hanakawa?"

"I came through a hole in the ceiling." Hanakawa had been brought there against his will by a woman named Kris. After that, he had encountered Yoshifumi, which had led to the current situation.

"Same with me. It seems like Yoshifumi found a different way in, but I have no idea where," Vivian added, looking at the fallen Sage.

"We didn't walk all that far, so we should head back to the hole."

"It was quite high up, though. Do you have some means of ascending?" Hanakawa asked.

"I'm sure the baby can figure something out. She was able to slow our fall when we came in."

"Daddy, please don't call me a baby," the three-year-old complained with a pout. Yogiri had gotten into the habit of calling her "the baby," but now that she had grown, she didn't seem to like it.

"Well, sure, I guess you're not a baby anymore. Should I call you 'the girl' instead?"

"Okay, you can't be that lazy!" Tomochika interjected. "I think calling her 'the baby' was already bad enough!"

"Then someone should come up with a name for her," Yogiri replied. He had already given up on finding a name Tomochika would accept.

"Allow me."

"Uh, we're definitely not accepting suggestions from Hanakawa," Tomochika said, stopping him.

"Why?!"

"You'd probably just call her Moe or something."

"What kind of prejudice is that?! I think that deserves an apology for all

the Moes of the world!"

"Hmm. But coming up with a name out of nowhere is pretty hard. She's really cute, so I want a name that fits that." Tomochika crossed her arms, sinking into thought.

"If it's going to take that long, let's get outside first. For now we can just call her 'the girl.' If you're unhappy about that, we can talk about it later."

"That is exactly the kind of temporary solution that ends up becoming permanent, isn't it?!"

"Okay then. Do you have a way to get us outside?" Yogiri asked the girl.

"You're going to call me 'girl'? Anyway, yeah, I should be able to make everyone float."

"Then let's go."

They headed back the way Yogiri's group had come from, returning to the large hallway with the hole in the ceiling soon enough. They hadn't actually made it that far into the ruins.

"All right," Yogiri prompted their young companion, "please and thank you."

"Yah!" The girl gave a cute shout, and as she did, the six of them started floating up into the air, ascending gradually.

"Ohhh! What a refreshing experience!"

"Weren't you flying around before, Hanakawa?" Tomochika recalled her first encounter with him in this world. He had flown towards them along with a couple of their other classmates.

"That was not the same thing. Flying at high speed is one thing, but this feeling of suspension is quite different and quite enjoyable!"

After floating for a bit, they passed through the hole in the ceiling and made it back to solid ground. The fallen spaceships were scattered all around them. It was a strange sight, but nothing much had changed since they'd gone underground.

"Thank goodness. I thought some other weirdos would have showed up the moment we got back," Tomochika sighed with relief.

"Er...is this situation not bizarre enough? There are gross-looking spaceships scattered around everywhere!"

"What are those things?!"

Hanakawa and Vivian had both shouted out in surprise.

"They attacked us, so I killed them."

“You ‘killed’ the spaceships? Well, I suppose that *is* the kind of person you are, Sir Takatou.”

“For now, let’s use one of the buildings. Maybe we can’t exactly relax there, but at least it’s better than being underground.”

Passing through the burned-out scar in the ruins, they returned to the surviving structures, selecting a particularly sturdy one to rest in.

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Chapter 2 — I Feel like You've Betrayed Me, Hanakawa

After entering the building, they split into two groups by gender, each taking a different room. They had gotten rather dirty in the ruins and had decided to change. Being covered in dust was pretty unpleasant. Hanakawa was getting changed beside Yogiri, pulling clothes out of his item box. Yogiri settled for retrieving clothes from his magic backpack.

"Hanakawa, are you giving up on being a clown?"

"What a bizarre question to ask!" Hanakawa had changed into clothes more appropriate for this world. It was the kind of outfit that didn't stand out much, worn by ordinary people living in the cities.

"I thought you were wearing that jester outfit because you liked it."

"Who would enjoy such gaudy clothing?! I was forced to wear it by Sir Yoshifumi!"

After getting changed, they headed back to what seemed to be the living room. It had nothing but a stone table and a few chairs and wasn't all that comfortable, but it was much better than sitting on the ground. Taking a seat, the two of them waited until the girls appeared.

Tomochika had changed out of her jungle clothes. Apparently, she hadn't considered the fact that they might be walking through the forest again soon. They had also changed the Enju android's clothes, but Yogiri couldn't imagine Mokomoko taking much of an interest in such things, so that might have been at Tomochika's insistence.

"I feel surprisingly refreshed," Tomochika commented as she stepped into the room.

"Hah! My Shower Shield is capable of producing as much hot water as you need!" Vivian declared proudly.

"Your shields can really do anything, can't they?"

Sitting down around the table, they began discussing the situation.

"So," Yogiri started, "our plan was to get out of the forest, find

Yoshifumi, and get his Philosopher's Stone, but we already did that."

"That doesn't change that we're still stuck in the forest," Tomochika added. They had originally gone to the ruins in hopes of finding a clue for how to get out of the forest. Their inability to escape hadn't yet been solved.

"I was only here because Sir Yoshifumi forced me to accompany him. I was unaware that escaping the forest was particularly challenging," Hanakawa offered.

"Oh, that's right," Tomochika said. "We thought you might know how to get out of here or be able to get out and summon the rest of us."

"Yes, well, about that. A woman named Kris, who I encountered in the forest, stole my summoning ability. Though she is now deceased, my power has not returned."

"So what can you do now?"

"As before, I am nothing but a Healer."

"So you're useless..."

"Tomochika! Please don't say it like that! Despite how I may appear, I am quite sensitive! My glass heart will shatter to pieces!"

"I feel like you've betrayed me, Hanakawa."

"Ugh...you had high hopes for me and saw those hopes dashed without me even knowing?"

"But you can use healing magic? Isn't that rather impressive?" Vivian asked.

"I am level ninety-nine! I can heal any injury that does not result in instant death!"

"Does this world have a leveling system?" Yogiri asked. "I've never heard of it. Is level ninety-nine the limit?"

"It differs according to race, but for humans like us, that is the case. There are, however, skills that allow one to exceed it."

Yogiri and Tomochika didn't have the game-like Battlesong client installed. That left them unable to experience levels or skills like Hanakawa and their other classmates did. As a fan of video games, Yogiri was a little disappointed.

"Ah! Back in the village, you said you were planning on getting through the Elven Forest, right, Vivian? So does that mean you know how to get out of here?"

"Umm...we had an item called the Bell of Guidance, which allowed us to

make it through the Lost Woods, but it is probably gone now. Maanu was holding it when that strange light...”

When they had first arrived, Vivian’s group had been attacked by the stone giants who appeared from the transforming buildings. They had managed to somehow break through the defenses in their attempt to reach the largest building in the ruins, but a beam of light had incinerated them shortly before they made it there. Vivian’s shield powers had barely saved her, but the others had been annihilated. Naturally, their possessions had met the same fate.

“So in short, no one knows how to get out of here.”

There was the young girl with them too, but she had been born from the transforming Philosopher’s Stones. It was hard to imagine she would know anything about the forest.

“Should we go back to searching the underground ruins again?”

They had originally thought that the ruins might hold a clue about how to escape, since they were situated right at the center of the forest. But the majority of the structures on the surface had been destroyed, so if there was anything left to be found, it would likely be underground.

“No, we should be able to get out now,” Mokomoko finally said. “The girl can float us out, right? Those spaceships got here by flying, so it seems like the Lost Woods effect doesn’t cover the sky.”

“That’s right. We did say ‘If only we could fly’ earlier, didn’t we? Do you think you could make us fly?” Yogiri asked the girl.

“Yeah.”

“Then I guess we’ve found our way out.”

“Hold on!” Tomochika shouted. “Why can this girl fly in the first place?! Why is everyone acting like it’s normal?! And what happened to the Philosopher’s Stones?! Are we going to just keep looking for more of them?!”

“Ah, yeah, I guess that’s still a problem.”

“That’s the only problem that’s left, isn’t it?! It’s more important than whether or not we can get out of the forest.”

“So, who exactly is this girl?”

“I don’t like you calling me that either. Pick something else. We’ve relaxed now, right?” The name problem returned. The child was finally insisting that they give her a proper name.

“Don’t you have any ideas for what you want to be called?”

“I can’t think of anything. I want you to think of one, daddy.”

“Then why are you complaining about the ideas I’ve had?”

“Because that ‘name’ doesn’t count!” Tomochika offered. She didn’t seem happy with his choices either.

“Well, she did come from Philosopher’s Stones, so maybe Stone?”

“You really have no naming sense at all, do you, Sir Takatou?” Even Hanakawa was starting to criticize him.

“Seeing Yogiri Takatou pushed into such a corner is quite a sight! I can’t help but enjoy the feeling!” For some reason, Vivian seemed to be loving the situation.

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“Hmm. A name. And just calling her ‘girl’ is no good...”

“No, it’s not. Go for something completely different,” Tomochika instructed.

“Okay, how about the opposite? Lrig? Or maybe just something from the last letter. How about Luu?”

The girl thought about it for a bit before accepting, then said, “Whatever, that’s fine.” She didn’t seem to particularly like it, but she didn’t hate it enough to complain.

“Okay then, Luu it is! Who exactly are you?”

“I’m a goddess. I don’t remember anything else, though. When I get bigger, I’ll probably remember more.”

“And you get bigger by getting more Philosopher’s Stones, right? What is that about?”

“Those stones are part of me. I need you to get more of them, daddy.”

“Is there a point to you getting any bigger? I heard the Philosopher’s Stones were a power source, so if we give them to you, will you be able to use the energy from them?”

“Why do you need energy?” Luu asked.

“We’re from a different world. We want to go back, but we were told that would take a huge amount of energy.”

Different worlds were arranged in a figurative vertical hierarchy in which power always flowed downward. Going from a higher world to a lower one merely involved falling, but moving from a lower world to a higher one required enough energy to combat that natural flow. This world existed on more or less the bottom of the hierarchy, so getting back to their own world would require a tremendous amount of energy.

“That’s okay! If I get back my original form, moving between worlds is super easy! So go get more of the stones!”

“And there is no threat of you turning against us the moment you have returned to your original strength, is there?” Hanakawa asked.

“That’s a good point,” Yogiri said. “You were sealed away by being split into those stones, right? There must have been a reason for it.”

Luu’s expression soured. There wasn’t much reason to trust her at this point. They couldn’t just accept what she was saying at face value.

“No idea!” she finally declared. “I don’t know why they sealed me away!”

“I guess that’s fine. Either way, we need your help to get out of here.”

“And what do we do once we make it out? We came to this island to get Yoshifumi’s Philosopher’s Stone, but we have already acquired it. So where do we go next?” Mokomoko asked.

“Good question. If we’re going to keep looking for Philosopher’s Stones, I guess we need to find more Sages.”

“That is hardly an issue,” Hanakawa said. “In situations like these, the main body can feel the scattered parts calling out to her! So Luu can probably detect where they are on instinct!”

“I have no clue where they are,” the girl replied instantly.

“But when you were a baby, you directed us to Yoshifumi’s stone, didn’t you?” Yogiri asked. They had only headed to the underground ruins because of her guidance.

“I can tell if they’re close, but that’s it.”

“That’s still enough to give us a little help,” Tomochika replied. It wasn’t like Luu was completely useless. At the very least, they didn’t have to worry about missing a stone that was close by.

“For starters, we need to get off this island. Yoshifumi was probably the only Sage here,” Yogiri said.

“In that case, I suppose we should head to the capital,” Vivian suggested. “There is a port there, so we should be able to find a ship to take us away.”

The island of Ent was long and thin, stretching from east to west. The imperial capital was on the eastern side and had a port. That was where Yogiri and Tomochika had originally intended to travel. But there were no boats on the western side of the island, so escaping from there was all but impossible.

“I guess we’ll leave the forest, head to the capital, and look for more information there,” Yogiri stated.

Staying in the forest and talking wouldn’t get them very far.

“So that’s where we’re going. What about you, Vivian?”

“There isn’t much reason for me to head to the capital, but being abandoned here doesn’t sound very good either!”

“You have those shields, so you can probably figure something out, can’t you? Like a shield that lets you fly?”

“Oh!”

It seemed Vivian had never thought of that.

Chapter 3 — The World Sword Omega Blade Is Almost Omnipotent in This World

In a cave in the Elven Forest, Shigeto Mitadera held a sword in his hands. It was a simple weapon with no decoration at all, about a meter long, and could be comfortably used with one hand.

It was the World Sword Omega Blade. Normally, there would have been no way for him to obtain such a weapon on his own. But dominated by the swordswoman Kris, he had been tasked with watching over the blade until its reconstruction was complete.

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Shortly after arriving in this world, Shigeto had split off from his classmates. The powers he had obtained as a Master Oracle had led him away from the others. The route leading to the capital was incredibly difficult, and the class had ultimately been being wiped out. Having known that in advance thanks to his prophecies, he had split off from them, traveling only with Rei Kushima and Akinobu Marufuji.

By that point, he had likely already been under Rei's control. He should have been capable of using his powers to keep the whole class alive, or if not, it would have been more efficient for him to travel on his own. There wasn't any reason for him to travel with those two classmates in particular. But he had ended up including them in his plans to defeat the Sages. He now realized how reckless it had been, but he had thought it was the best plan at the time.

In order to defeat the Sages, he had sought out the World Sword Omega Blade. They had traveled across the world in search of the weapon and the tools needed to restore its power. But after arriving in the Empire of Ent where the weapon was located, the Sage Yoshifumi had crushed them. Akinobu had been killed, Rei had been kidnapped, and although he had

thought it was all over, Yoshifumi had brought Shigeto to the Elven Forest.

As it turned out, the Sage had also had an interest in the Omega Blade. And in the underground ruins beneath the forest, he had finally found it. Shigeto had managed to grab the sword and escape from the Sage with Rei. They had met a strange boy on their way out but had otherwise managed to flee without issue and hide in a cave in the forest. They'd created the cocoon for the weapon's reconstruction, but while they were waiting for the process to complete, Rei had been killed and Shigeto had been gravely wounded.

A swordswoman named Kris had appeared out of nowhere. She had the power to steal abilities from people, so she had taken Shigeto's prophetic powers and Rei's abilities as a Femme Fatale, which she had then used to control Shigeto. She had been obsessed with getting stronger herself and hadn't been interested in the weapon at all, but she didn't want to let someone else get their hands on it. Shigeto had been instructed to protect the weapon. When it was complete, he would bring it to her. She had assumed that, since he was under her control, he wouldn't betray her even if he had such a powerful artifact.

But her control of him had suddenly disappeared. Shortly after, the World Sword had been completed, and just as he was wondering what to do, Navi had appeared at his side.

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"Now, let me explain about the sword!" Navi began, a victorious smile on her face. "The World Sword Omega Blade is almost omnipotent in this world."

"Omnipotent. You mean it can do anything?"

"Yes, though there are many things it cannot do."

"Even though it's omnipotent?" Her statement immediately started sounding suspicious.

"I said *almost* omnipotent. True omnipotence is impossible. It doesn't take much thought to realize the concept is self-contradictory."

"I get that, but..."

"Practically speaking, it is essentially omnipotent. It can do more or less anything, so allow me to explain the things it cannot do. For starters, its power cannot be used if you aren't touching it. Anyone who is touching it can

make use of it, so do not allow it to be stolen."

"Of course."

"However, there is a simple solution to that problem. It is possible to merge the weapon with your body and store it within yourself."

"I can do that?"

"Of course. That is nothing at all for the World Sword."

"I guess I should start there, then. It would be pretty stupid to have it stolen after all this work. What do I do?"

"Just thinking that you want to merge with it is enough."

"I only have to think it?"

"Absorb the sword into his body." He couldn't conjure up a concrete image of how that would look, but he tried his best to imagine the concept. As he did, the sword in his right hand slipped into his body.

"Whoa...that felt kind of gross."

The weapon had disappeared. At least, that's how it appeared from the outside. But Shigeto could still feel the weight of the weapon in his right arm.

"You should have no issues using the World Sword in that state. As such, there is no need to go through the trouble of materializing the sword in the future."

"Will other people be able to use it if they touch my body?"

"Not unless you intentionally make it so. Allow me to continue explaining the limits of the World Sword. First of all, it can only exercise its power in this world."

By "this world," she meant within their current Celestial Foundation. Worlds were contained within borders known as Foundations, which all floated in a space known as "the sea."

"Next, it can only directly influence something that you are consciously aware of. For example, you couldn't use it to do something in a far-off country you've never heard of."

"If you're wording it so strangely, that must mean I can do something *indirectly*, right?"

"That is correct. For example, you could create something and send it flying to a far-off country and have it exert whatever power you invested in it there."

"I guess there isn't much point in me messing with a country I've never heard of before, though."

“In addition, as long as it is within your conscious awareness, the sword will activate proactively to fulfill your wishes while you possess it. Earlier you wished for a scabbard, and so one was created, and you wanted an explanation, so I appeared. In short, though it will attempt to help you, at times it will have unexpected results. The safest way is to prevent it from activating except for when you are clearly wishing for something.”

“Yeah, I guess that could be a problem if it kept activating on its own. So how do I do that?”

“The easiest way is to set up a keyword. And you can do that just by thinking it.”

Do not activate on your own, Shigeto mentally commanded the weapon. *However, activate automatically if I am in danger,* he added as another condition came to mind.

“Continuing on then. The World Sword is capable of manifesting anything you can imagine. It cannot create any object or concept that you can’t think of.”

“Hmm...I guess I’ll figure that out as I use it.” There were probably some things he thought he understood but didn’t actually understand at all. He would only be able to work out those things by practicing.

“Furthermore, the limits of the World Sword: it functions using the energy present in this world. As such, it cannot create anything infinite. There is a limit to the things that can be created using the energy present in this world.”

“You mean the more I use it, the more energy will be consumed from the world?”

“Correct. However, normal usage should not pose any threat of depleting the world’s supply of energy. This ends the rough explanation. Do you have any questions?”

“So it can do almost anything. Does that include bringing dead people back to life?” Shigeto looked outside the cave, where the grave he had just made for Rei was.

“It is possible, but in Rei’s case, the revival would be limited. Reconstructing her damaged body is possible, but restoring her mind is not.”

“What do you mean? Can’t you just repair the brain?”

“It isn’t possible to restore the body to the point of returning the elementary particles that made it up to their original states. Or rather, it would be possible, if you knew what states they were in. Do you have such detailed

information?”

“Of course not.”

“As such, you can reconstruct the body to the point where it functions how you remembered it. But restoring the brain to what it once was isn’t possible.”

“I see. But you said ‘in Rei’s case.’ Why is that?”

“It would be different if we were speaking of someone who was native to this world. They can be resurrected more or less perfectly.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Those native to this world are recorded by the world from the moment of their birth. So in their case, you can make a rough reconstruction of their body and then artificially supply the recorded experiences necessary to make them the same person they were before. But for those from other worlds, there are no such records.”

“So people from other worlds can’t come back to life. I guess that is kind of obvious.”

“Normal forms of resurrection should work perfectly fine, even on people from other worlds, as long as it occurs within a few minutes of their heart stopping.”

“So Rei can’t be brought back to life because it’s been hours since she died?”

“She could be returned to life as a doll that did exactly as you wished. In that case, she would act just like you expected the real Rei would.”

“That’s not quite the same, though, is it? I think I’ll give up on that idea.”

“Is that so? Then I recommend you make a backup of yourself. If you record your personal information in this world, then if the worst happens, you will be able to be fully resurrected.”

“But I’m basically omnipotent now, right? Can something like that even happen to me?”

“It can. Though the World Sword is nearly omnipotent, it only acts according to your will. In short, you are still vulnerable to attacks you are unaware of, such as surprise attacks or attacks while you are asleep.”

“I see. Then I’m going to make a backup of myself, so could you keep an eye out for me?”

“You want me to? I am nothing but a manifestation of the Book of Prophecy.” Surprised by the request, Navi seemed puzzled.

“I can just improve your detection and combat abilities, right?”

If the World Sword could do almost anything, it should be capable of something like that. Shigeto decided to make Navi as strong as possible. It was a pretty vague instruction, but he left the rest up to the sword. He figured that having too powerful a detection ability could be a hindrance for Navi, so he made it possible for her to modify the scope of it as well.

“It can do anything, right? Then make me something good to eat.”

Shigeto had realized he hadn’t eaten in a while. He issued the order to the World Sword, and a plate of curry and rice appeared on the floor of the cave.

“Wait, is that the best you can do? Shouldn’t it be able to make something more impressive?”

“I suppose that’s the limit of your imagination. It can’t create anything you haven’t tasted before.”

“It’s a lot harder to use this than I thought.”

“Is that so? I would think it would be fine to use your powers to go somewhere you can find the food you’re looking for.”

“For now I’ll just give this a try. Give me a spoon. And eating on the floor doesn’t sound very pleasant either.”

A table and two chairs. Two plates of curry and rice, two cups of water, and two spoons. Giving those orders to the sword made the items appear with no issue at all.

“Umm, there is no need to provide food for me,” Navi said.

“It’s fine, just eat. Eating by myself is lonely.”

“If you insist.”

Navi took a seat along with him. Shigeto tried a bite of the curry. It tasted just like the food he was used to at home.

After finishing the meal, they took a rest.

“So, what am I supposed to do now?”

“You can do whatever you like,” Navi replied.

“I guess so. Things have been pretty rough so far, but there aren’t many people who can hurt me now, are there? If I just want to live comfortably, I don’t even have to leave.”

“That is true. You can create anything you need right here. Though if you want something you don’t know about, you’ll have to go out and find information on it. Of course, you could always create subordinates and send them out to do the work for you.”

“I really can do anything, huh? What did I want to do all this time? If I go back to my world, I’ll lose this power, right?”

“Correct. You cannot use the sword outside of this world, and the Gift you possess will also cease to function.”

It wouldn’t be hard for him to go back to his own world and continue his ordinary high school life, but the idea seemed strangely surreal. Still, there wasn’t a whole lot he was interested in doing here either.

“Should I just stick to the original plan then?”

If he wanted to live an ordinary life, the World Sword could easily make that happen. The Sages sought out those with great power, but if the sword was really that powerful, he could use it to hide himself.

But he couldn’t help feeling like hiding was the wrong approach. All the suffering he had experienced could be traced back to the Sages. If he wanted to live an easy, relaxed life, he would need to teach them a lesson first.

“I was looking for the World Sword so I could defeat the Sages. Why don’t I just do that?”

Shigeto decided to throw a wrench in the plans of the people who claimed to rule this world.

Chapter 4 — This Is When the “Good Grief”-Type Protagonist Should Be Stepping Forward!

Having decided on a plan, at least for now, they left the stone structure behind.

“Nothing is going to suddenly appear in front of us and try and take us by surprise now, is it?” Tomochika asked as she looked around, having grown rather suspicious. Aside from the fallen spaceships, there was nothing particularly out of the ordinary.

“Okay then. Warp Shield!” Vivian hurled the shield in her hands. It stopped in the air, opening into a large elliptical mirror.

“You really can do anything with those shields, can’t you?” Yogiri commented.

“This looks a lot easier than trying to fly with them, right?” Rather than showing their reflections, the mirror was showing a rundown village. It appeared to be connected to the village where Vivian had lived before. “But it looks like I can only go to places I’ve already been. So sorry, I guess I can’t take you out on the east side of the forest.”

“I’m sure we’ll find a way. All we have to do is fly, apparently.”

“With those shields, rebuilding your kingdom should be no issue at all,” Mokomoko remarked, impressed.

Yogiri felt the same. Judging by what they had seen so far, she could do more or less anything with them.

“Yeah, I’ll have to think about it a bit more. A lot of things happened between us, but in the end Yoshifumi is dead, so it’s all fine. Feel free to come and visit once the kingdom has been rebuilt! I’ll have some tea waiting for you!”

“We’re looking for more Sages, so I doubt we’ll end up coming back here.” Yogiri didn’t expect they’d ever return to this distant island.

“Takatou...you’re supposed to promise we’ll meet again, even if you have to lie,” Tomochika admonished him.

“Oh, really? Well, I guess it’s not *impossible* that we’ll meet again. So if by some chance we happen to end up back here, maybe we’ll come see you.”

“Yogiri Takatou, you really are going to act like that up until the end, aren’t you?!”

“Stay safe, Vivian.”

“See you later!” Vivian touched the surface of the mirror. The image rippled, and she slipped into it without issue. After Vivian had entirely passed through, the shield shrank and disappeared.

“If she can only travel to locations she previously visited, would it not have been best for her to accompany us to the capital?” Hanakawa asked. “Since she can return home at any time from anywhere.”

“Why didn’t you say something earlier?” Tomochika demanded.

“I’m sure she’ll be fine as long as she has those shields,” Yogiri said. If Vivian could use them to fly, she wouldn’t have any problem getting to East Ent. “Okay then, next is our turn. Luu, can you take us all into the sky?”

Luu looked around at the group. Yogiri, Tomochika, Enju possessed by Mokomoko, and Hanakawa. Along with Luu herself, that made five.

“Yeah, I think I can handle this many people.”

“Thank goodness! I was a tiny bit concerned you would say I was too heavy and that you would have to leave me behind, so I am much relieved!”

They had no intention of leaving him, but Hanakawa had been worried.

“Could you fly us far enough to get back to the mainland?”

“I don’t think we can go that far.”

They had gotten the lay of the land from Vivian. To the east of the island was a large continent, and it was their closest option.

“I guess we’ll have to see how far we can make it. Let’s go,” said Yogiri.

“Everyone, stand near me!” They all gathered around Luu. “Here we go!” As she spoke, they began to float into the air. Slowly ascending, they could see the forest disappearing into the horizon.

“Hmm. I thought we would be rather disadvantaged after losing Furemaru, but it appears Luu will be a sufficient replacement!” Mokomoko commented.

The girl’s power must have been something like telekinesis. It was a simple ability but easy to use and apply to a wide variety of situations.

“Looks like the Lost Woods is still functional up here. You’ll have to keep taking us up,” Yogiri instructed Luu. The spaceships had arrived from outside the forest, and Haruto Ootori had come and gone by flying, so they should have been able to make their way out as long as they got high enough.

“By the way, would it not have been smarter to have Vivian go and check if we could actually leave by flying out?” Hanakawa asked again.

“Oh, I guess you’re right. You’re surprisingly sharp today.”

If they couldn’t get out this way, they could have had Vivian take them out the western side. They could then fly to the eastern side of the island without going through the forest at all.

“Sir Takatou...you really have survived in this world entirely by bulldozing through every situation with your instant death power, haven’t you?”

“I guess we can’t argue with that!” Tomochika said.

There were six enormous trees positioned in a sort of hexagon in the middle of the forest. As they rose above them, Yogiri felt something in the air change.

“Did we make it out?” asked Tomochika.

“Seems that way.”

They stopped ascending. Now that they were out of the Lost Woods, they could see the entire forest in one look. Though it was certainly large, it didn’t seem to extend forever like it had before. As they looked around to try and figure out which direction was east, they saw a large city in the distance. Being so high up in the air, it was hard to gauge just how far away it was, but it was a considerable distance from the forest. It was surrounded by walls and had countless buildings, so there was little doubt it was the capital.

It also seemed close to being destroyed.

“That city is totally under attack!” Tomochika cried.

The thing attacking the city was obviously large, but it was hard to tell what it was at a glance. It was swinging around a number of enormous objects, using them to smash apart the buildings. The creature was obviously intent on the city’s destruction, given the way it was tearing down the walls and sweeping away the structures within.

“Perhaps that is a hydra? A large monster with many heads. Like Yamata no Orochi, the eight-headed serpent of Japanese myth.”

Once Hanakawa suggested that, Yogiri saw it in the same way. The city

was being struck by the thing's heads. Numerous long necks sprouted from a central body, and at the end of them were what appeared to be heads. But it wasn't just heads growing from a body—it also had tails, wings, hands, and tentacles protruding. Altogether, it was hard to put a name on the enormous creature.

And it wasn't merely striking the city with physical force. It had heads that looked like lions breathing fire and others that looked like goats breathing lightning. Something that looked like a tail covered in spikes was launching those spikes as projectile weapons.

The city wasn't totally defenseless. Some sort of magic was flying back at the monster. But given the creature's size, the attacks didn't seem to matter. It was hard to believe they were enough to even hurt it. The creature seemed to be unaware of the defensive measures. It relentlessly kept up its attack. They didn't know if its goal was to destroy the city or the people in it, but it didn't seem like it was just passing through. At this rate, the city was more or less doomed.

"They aren't just snakes, though; the heads are of all sorts of animals," Mokomoko said. "I guess it's more like a chimera, then. By the way, just because the Yamata no Orochi has eight forking tails, do not think that means it has nine heads. Do not think of it as eight divisions, but as being divided into eight points. The question then of course arises, why eight? In legend, it was said to have eight heads and eight tails, but long ago, the number eight was used metaphorically to represent 'many.' So it is not necessarily the case that it had exactly eight heads."

"Is now really the time to be talking about this?!" cried Tomochika.

"A-At any rate!" Hanakawa interjected. "With Sir Takatou here, the wielder of the Eternal Force Blizzard, no opponent can threaten us in the least! We shall overcome no matter what terrifying foe confronts us! Now! Unleash upon that creature your merciless power!"

"It's not attacking us, so why would I kill it?"

"What?! I mean, aren't a lot of people dying right now?! A city of that size must have hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of residents, and at this rate every single one of them will be slain!"

"That's a problem for the people of this world. We're not from this world, and we're not even anywhere close to the city, so I don't think it's my place to intervene."

“I guess that’s kind of true.” Tomochika was surprised by the creature’s presence but seemed to agree that they didn’t need to do anything about it. They couldn’t be sure that this wasn’t all fallout from Yogiri’s previous actions, but even if it was, they wouldn’t accomplish anything by worrying about it.

“No, no, no! Why are you accepting this, Tomochika?! Are you going to let that monster rampage unchecked?!”

“Don’t you think it might have a good reason for attacking them?”

“Miss Enju, please! That city is our objective, is it not?!”

“The capital was our intended destination, but only to collect information. A city in that state will be of no use to us. There should be any number of other places where we can find information about the Sages,” Mokomoko responded calmly.

“Why have I suddenly been forced to take the role of the group’s common sense guide?! That should be Tomochika’s role as the heroine!”

“If you want to do something about it, we can let you off at the capital,” Yogiri offered. “Could you do that, Luu?”

“Yeah. You just want me to throw him over there, right?” Although Luu was currently holding them in the air as a group, she’d have no issue throwing a single person at the same time.

“You realize I would only die, right?!”

“Then stop trying to make us do it.”

“Are you saying you are just going to ignore such an immense attack?!”

“It’s pretty presumptuous to get involved in everything that happens in front of us, don’t you think?”

“Oh come on! This is when the ‘good grief’-type protagonist should be stepping forward!”

“‘Good grief’ is supposed to mean I’m fed up with it, right? So why would I say that while solving the problem?”

“Huh? Uhh, well now that you mention it, I’m not sure. Perhaps it is similar to the tsundere archetype?”

“Luu, do you think you could get us to the mainland from here?”

Beyond the capital to the east, they could see the sea. There should have been another continent on the other side of the water, but they couldn’t see it from where they were. It was supposed to be relatively close by, but it was probably still a good distance away.

“I don’t think I could do it without any breaks. If there were islands along the way where we could rest, it would probably be all right.”

“So I guess just flying off without a plan is a bad idea. Okay, then let’s find a port town. That looks like one, right?” On the other side of the capital was another city on the water. It wasn’t as impressive as the capital, but it didn’t seem to be under attack either.

“So what should we do? Go straight there?” If they headed in a straight line, they would pass right over the capital. Luu didn’t seem to be sure that it was a good idea.

“Well, we are pretty high up. I don’t think the monster will notice us.”

“I do not know if I agree,” Hanakawa said. “If we are hoping to avoid danger, it would be best to take the long way around. If we are flying anyway, taking a more circuitous path should not impact our travel time significantly.”

“I guess that’s true. Okay then, Luu. Take us to the port city without going over the capital.”

“Okay!”

They began to move again, flying forward diagonally. As they did, Yogiri noticed the sky was unreasonably bright. Looking up, he saw the clouds had parted, and something was coming down through them, shining brilliantly. It was an army of humanoid figures, clad in armor and bearing weapons.

“Oh, I remember these guys...” They were a response from the aerial defense network set up by the Sages. Yogiri had encountered them once on his way to the island. The Sages didn’t permit anyone to use the sky.

“Angels again?! Didn’t they learn anything the first time?!” Tomochika shouted.

But Yogiri had had no difficulty dealing with them before, and it wouldn’t be any harder to do it again. If they were going to harass them all the way to the continent, he’d just have to keep killing them. He had already killed a number of Sages, so he was clearly their enemy by now. There was no point in trying to hide from them.

Even so, it wasn’t his style to act preemptively, so he waited to see what the angels would do. He didn’t feel any killing intent coming from them, and it didn’t seem like they were concerned about their group in the least.

The angels descended from the sky and headed straight for the capital. They hurled the spears in their hands at the enormous monster. They had

shown up to protect the city.

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Chapter 5 — Your Attitude Towards Me Has Really Changed, Euphemia...

A little earlier:

A week after they had departed the City of the War God, Risley's group was walking through the forest.

"This place is a lot farther than I thought! Will we really be able to catch up to them?!" Risley had fallen for Yogiri Takatou, so they had set off to meet him. Though she had managed to meet him once, he had immediately left them behind and gone his own way.

"It depends on the weather, but I hear that a voyage to the island of Ent takes about a week," Euphemia replied. "As such, if all goes well, we will be able to avoid that journey."

Ships heading to Ent weren't especially frequent. If Yogiri had planned on using a ship to get there, they wouldn't be able to catch up in time. Euphemia had suggested they instead used the teleportation devices the Sage Lain had set up around the world.

"Ugh...but if it doesn't go well, we've lost a ton of time..." Risley said.

If they caught up within a few days of Yogiri reaching Ent, there would be no problem. But if they took too long, he would leave again, heading for a new destination. Following him from there would be even more difficult. Risley wanted to avoid that at all costs.

"We are finally here." Euphemia, who had been guiding Risley by the hand, pulled her to a stop.

"Are you sure?"

The trees came to an end, and a clearing opened in front of them. It looked like there was something there, but it was hard to tell in the dim starlight.

"That's a pretty big house for being so far out in the wilderness."

"You can see it, Carol?" Risley asked.

"Yep. The Ninja class is specialized in acting at night, after all." Carol S. Lane replied. Risley had clung to Euphemia for their whole journey due to

how poor visibility was in the forest at night, but Carol could see easily enough.

"I can't imagine why, but for some reason the Samurai class provides me with night vision too," Ryouko Ninomiya commented.

"I can also see just fine. Is it because I am a vampire now?" the half-demon Origin Blood Euphemia added.

"So I'm the only one who can't see?! On that note, is there *anything* I can do?!"

Risley was a clone created by Lain, but she had no memories of the event. Upon awakening, a recording of a woman named Lain had played, telling her who she was. The Sage had created Risley in such a way as to avoid her being killed by Yogiri's instant death ability. For that reason, Risley had none of Lain's memories or powers.

"That is fine, Risley. Allow me to take care of all the bothersome work for you."

Euphemia was a half-demon woman who had shown up right when Risley had planned to set out on her journey. She had been turned into a vampire by Lain, and following the Sage's death, an intense battle had erupted over who would inherit the title of Origin Blood. Though she had no interest in it, Euphemia had been wrapped up in the battle and ended up winning. As such, all of Lain's powers as a vampire were now in her possession. Though she had become the Origin Blood, her allegiance to Lain remained ingrained in her, and those feelings also applied to the Sage's clone, Risley.

"So, this is one of Lain's mansions?"

"Yes. She has many across the world."

There were teleportation devices connecting the estates. Since the estate where Risley had first woken up was particularly isolated, it didn't have any such device. They had come to this one in hopes of reaching Yogiri sooner. Still holding Euphemia's hand, Risley made her way towards the house. But after walking for a short time, Euphemia pulled her to a stop again.

"What's wrong?"

"There should be staff maintaining the estate. It is strange for it to be completely dark like this."

"Maybe they don't use lights because they don't want people to find them?"

"No, a barrier has been erected around the building. No one can see

through it from the outside, so there is no need to worry about lighting."

"Maybe they're asleep since it's night?"

"No, they are not permitted to sleep. Their role is to maintain the estate, so they must be prepared for Lain's arrival at any time."

"Huh? Isn't that kind of mean?" Risley had no idea what kind of person Lain had been. But she seemed like someone insensitive enough to force her servants to stay awake and await her return with no idea when that would be.

"They are all members of her lineage, so there is no need to be concerned. The mansion exists for Lady Lain's sake, so it is only natural that everything in it is maintained for her as well."

"Of course I'm going to be concerned! What's with this Lain person?!"

"I know very little about what kind of person Lady Lain was. We were only together for a brief period."

"Hmmm. If they're all from her lineage, maybe they can see in the dark and don't need light?"

"Perhaps they can see in the dark, but that doesn't mean they especially like it. They should have set up lights at night." Euphemia spoke vaguely, since she had only been turned into a vampire herself recently. She had inherited all of Lain's knowledge, but it didn't always feel entirely real.

"Hmm. It doesn't seem like there's anyone inside. There's nothing moving or alive in there. Well, vampires are technically undead, so it's not out of the question for her to use undead to guard it," Carol mused. One of her skills as a Ninja was to detect all life in a given area around her. She could tell there was nothing moving or alive around, but there was always the possibility that something dead was around.

"This is too strange. Risley is a form of Lady Lain. Someone should have noticed your approach and come out to greet you."

Risley thought back to when she had first met Euphemia. She'd stepped outside to get ready for her journey when the half-demon had suddenly showed up and knelt down in front of her. Despite having become an Origin Blood herself, Euphemia couldn't bring herself to ignore Risley, so it was unlikely that any ordinary member of Lain's lineage could do so either.

"Let's be careful, then," Ryouko said. The state of the mansion was baffling—they would need to be on guard.

Euphemia began walking again, Risley keeping close behind her. A set of double doors stood in front of them. After a short pause, Euphemia threw the

doors open. Vampires had supernaturally good senses, and as an Origin Blood, hers were even stronger. She seemed to determine that the entrance was safe enough for the moment. The interior of the mansion was dark enough that Risley was effectively blind.

"Even if I can see well in the dark, this is a bit much." As Euphemia spoke, a ball of light appeared over her palm.

"Huh? You can do that?"

"Even someone who isn't a vampire should be able to manage this much."

"Then why didn't you do it from the start—gyaah!"

The now-illuminated entranceway was dyed red. The likely source of that redness was lying scattered on the floor in front of them. Body parts. Arms, legs, a head, a torso split into multiple pieces, and scattered organs lay strewn about the hallway.

"Wh-Wh-Wh-What's going on?!" Risley exclaimed.

"Hmm. This doesn't seem that fresh. Has it been a long time since this happened?" In contrast to Risley's panic, Carol was totally calm.

"It appears to be more than one person. There are too many pieces for one body." Ryouko didn't seem especially surprised either.

"I see. Perhaps a battle for succession occurred here as well."

"What do you mean?"

"Upon Lady Lain's death, the members of her lineage were freed from her direct control. A battle quickly ensued to determine who would become an Origin Blood in her place." Only one of those Lain had turned could inherit the title, and they could only do so once they were the last of her direct subordinates.

"Oh, now that you mention it, there was no one in the mansion I woke up in either. Was that for the same reason?"

"Yes, although it didn't seem like any fighting had occurred in the mansion itself."

"So even if it's kind of gross, it's not dangerous, right?"

"That should be the case, since I am the only survivor."

"Do you think the teleporter is working?"

"I do not know. Lady Lain is the only one who can use them, so I cannot think why they would fight over the devices..."

Though their attention had been drawn by the bodies, the rest of the entranceway was in pretty bad shape. A rather intense battle must have taken

place there.

With a scowl, Euphemia lifted Risley up into the air with her telekinesis before taking her in her arms. She must have been trying to save the child from having to step on the remains.

Passing through the entranceway, they found a large staircase leading to the second floor. Ignoring the staircase, Euphemia walked alongside it. She touched the wall supporting the stairs, and it gave a small click before sliding out of the way. There was a secret door there. On the other side was a staircase heading down. It must have been a hidden staircase leading to the teleportation device.

"Ohh! It's like a ninja mansion!" Carol was suddenly excited.

"It does not appear that anyone intruded here," Euphemia observed. Though the large upward staircase had been considerably damaged, there were no signs of disturbance underneath.

Taking the stairs down, they ended up in a small room.

"That's a pretty clear magic circle, huh?" Carol said, looking at the floor of the room. A large circle had been drawn in white, and within it were numerous letters and geometric shapes. That must have been the magic circle Carol was talking about.

"Yes, anyone within it will be teleported. There do not appear to be any problems with it," Euphemia said, looking around the room. The only thing in the room was the magic circle, so it must have been some sort of magical device that Risley didn't understand.

Euphemia stepped into the circle, putting Risley back down on her feet. As she did, the circle began to glow, and images appeared before Euphemia's eyes. The half-demon reached towards them, and the images began to change. It seemed she could use them to control the teleportation mechanic.

"We should have no problem reaching the Empire of Ent."

"Are there places we *can't* go?" Risley asked.

"If the destination has been destroyed then it is impossible, but it appears there are no problems with Ent. What would you like to do?"

"Let's teleport. I want to meet up with Yogiri as soon as possible," she answered. While that was certainly true, she was also quite eager to leave the blood-soaked mansion behind.

"Understood. Everyone, please step inside."

At Euphemia's instruction, Carol and Ryouko stepped into the circle.

Euphemia continued to fiddle with the images, and the edges of the circle began to glow brighter. They were now standing in a tube made of light. After a short time, the light faded.

Risley looked around confused. “Did we teleport? It looks like nothing changed.”

“I imagine all of the mansions look quite similar,” Euphemia said. “The teleportation should have been a success.” She stepped out of the magic circle, and Risley followed her.

“I was hoping it would be flashier than that. Like we’d go flying through a space full of spinning clocks!”

“Just be happy that it was so quick. If it took any longer, it would just get nerve-racking,” Ryouko said as she and Carol stepped out of the circle.

“It doesn’t seem like there’s anyone around. Of course, that doesn’t account for any undead who aren’t moving yet.” Carol led the group from the front, heading to the stairs with the rest of them close behind her. At the top of the stairs was a door, which she opened and let everyone through.

“Whoa! What is that?!” Risley shouted in surprise at the first sight that greeted them. She had never imagined such a thing would be waiting for them.

“Is it a dragon?” Carol seemed more curious than surprised.

The huge head of some monster was in front of them. The large reptilian face was covered in black scales, detached from whatever body had once held it.

“The rest of it is over there. It appears it was beheaded with a single strike,” Euphemia said, indicating the large winged body lying nearby. “This was a prosperous city long ago,” she continued. “It is where the Origin Bloods were born, but that is not important now. Let us proceed.”

Risley looked around. It seemed like they were in an enormous cave, large enough that Euphemia’s light couldn’t illuminate the entire cavern. They could see stone structures nearby, so it did seem to be a city.

“Huh? We’re just going to ignore the dragon?!”

“It is already dead. What do you want us to do?”

“Your attitude towards me has really changed, Euphemia...”

An ancient city and a dragon shrouded in the darkness of a cavern. Though she was right that it was of no concern to them, Risley couldn’t help but be curious about what had happened there.

But this wasn't the time to be investigating. They needed to get out and find the capital of Ent. As Risley looked around to find the exit, a huge impact threw her off her feet.

"What was that?! An earthquake?!" she exclaimed.

"I don't know. Please be careful," Euphemia warned everyone. The powerful shaking continued, and the stone buildings behind them began to collapse. The ceiling of the cavern crumbled, raining down chunks of rock. "Everyone, get close to me."

Risley stepped up to Euphemia's side. Carol and Ryouko did the same. The falling rocks fell well away from them. It seemed they were being deflected by something. Risley was relieved. She had been worried when the earthquake had started, but it seemed like Euphemia was capable of keeping them safe.

"This is the first time I've felt an earthquake in this world, but isn't it going on kind of long?" Carol asked.

Risley hadn't experienced an earthquake before, but she also found it hard to believe it would be such a long event.

"Maybe it's because of that?"

Ryouko pointed at the center of the city. It seemed to be turning into a mountain. The ground was rising up, throwing off the buildings that sat atop it. The mountain then shattered, leveling the surrounding buildings and turning the ancient capital into a barren expanse. If it hadn't been for Euphemia's protection, Risley would have been crushed by the debris.

"What *is* that?!" Carol shouted as she stared into the enormous hole the explosion had left.

The huge head of a lion popped up out of the emptiness. It continued upward, striking the ceiling of the cavern, carried by an unreasonably long neck. And it wasn't just a lion. The head of a ram and snake followed it up to attack the ceiling. A huge hand with enormous claws reached up and aided in the attack. Whatever it was, it seemed to be trying to escape.

"That is part of the Overlord."

Risley turned at the sudden voice from behind them. A slender man in a black suit had appeared.

"I have no idea what is going on either, but I guess I found it, so that's good enough for now."

"Umm...are you an enemy?" Carol asked nervously.

“Hm. I suppose it’s natural to be on guard when meeting someone in a place like this,” the stranger said. “However, I am only here by chance. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Zakuro. To use a word matching your language, I am a god. I have no intention of harming you.”

“And that thing won’t attack us?” Carol pointed at the monster destroying the ceiling.

“No, I doubt it would pay you any mind. You should be fine as long as you keep your distance.”

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘the Overlord,’ but does that mean you support that thing, even though you’re a god?” Carol asked.

“That’s correct. The word ‘god’ doesn’t really do justice to the many facets of my being.”

“Uhhh, I’m not sure if it’s okay to say this, but that Overlord thing doesn’t seem to have much in the way of intelligence.”

The beast Zakuro had called the Overlord was blindly flailing at the ceiling. Though it was clearly expressing a desire to break through, it was an entirely impulsive, animalistic expression.

“What are you saying, Carol?!” Risley hurriedly interjected. She didn’t know if this person was really a god, but Euphemia had begun sweating after seeing him. She recognized him as a considerable threat. If they hurt his feelings, who knew what would happen to them? This wasn’t the place to be speaking out of turn.

“As I said, this is but a part of him. It is not his true form.”

“I see. Then I guess it has nothing to do with us. Do you mind if we leave?”

Before Zakuro could give an answer, Risley was thrown backward into Carol’s arms.

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“Carol, Ryouko! Take Risley and run away!”

Euphemia had been the one to send Risley flying, and the other two girls wasted no time in doing as they were told. Carol broke off into a sprint, taking Risley away from Euphemia.

“What?! What’s going on?! He said he wasn’t going to hurt us.” Risley was confused. It shouldn’t have been such a volatile situation, and yet they were now running away. The last thing she saw was Euphemia lunging at Zakuro.

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Chapter 6 — I Don’t Know What You’re So Desperate For

The moment Euphemia saw the man named Zakuro, her hair stood on end. She could tell from his presence alone that he was far superior to an Origin Blood. She knew instinctively that he was an opponent she couldn’t beat. He was likely telling the truth when he claimed to be a god. If he felt that someone was irritating, they would be erased without a moment’s notice. She couldn’t even hope to fight a person like him. Carol and Ryouko must have also recognized the unusual aura he exuded, as they also went pale when they saw him. The only one who didn’t seem to realize what was going on was Risley.

“Umm...are you an enemy?” Carol asked nervously.

Euphemia couldn’t help but be impressed by her courage. That question confirmed he would not kill them immediately, so they had a little time.

Euphemia had a bad feeling about the situation. Zakuro was definitely a threat, but the enormous monster attempting to destroy the cavern ceiling also made her nervous. She knew nothing about the multiheaded beast, and yet she had felt uneasy from the moment she’d seen it. It was no mere monster. She could sense that it was something sacred and inviolable. Her instincts as an Origin Blood demanded she serve it. It had appeared from underground here, at the birthplace of the Origin Bloods. There was a chance it was related to her lineage in some way.

Again? Euphemia was gripped by despair. *Now that I think about it, I’ve just been controlled and passed around all this time...*

She was an Origin Blood, the pinnacle of vampirekind. She had never wanted to become one, but she had assumed that at this point she would be able to avoid being controlled by others. Unfortunately, there was always a bigger fish. Even a vampire, who was so far above humans, couldn’t disobey that creature. She understood that. Not because it was some kind of superior being like a god, but because it was the being that had created the Origin

Bloods themselves, vampires who would grow their ranks on their own, all for the sake of it ruling over them.

One of the beast's heads turned to face them. Was it looking at Zakuro or Euphemia? Or perhaps both of them? They didn't have any time left. She didn't know when her freedom would be taken from her. What could she do? She needed to do something to protect Risley. Her feelings towards Risley may have only been implanted in her artificially upon becoming an Origin Blood. She had been controlled and manipulated so much, she didn't know what the real Euphemia looked like anymore. But before she changed yet again, she wanted to protect that small, innocent girl.

Using her telekinesis, she threw Risley towards Carol and Ryouko. Carol would know exactly what to do here. She then lunged at Zakuro. There was no chance she could hurt him. All she hoped to accomplish was to hold his attention, even for an instant.

Carol and Ryouko used the brief window to run. That was good. They needed to get as far away as possible, away from the god and the monster. If they did that, their enemies would have no reason to take an interest in them and wouldn't pursue them.

Euphemia's fear was that she would be controlled by someone else and forced to harm Risley. If she could avoid that, nothing else mattered. All she could do was hope that Carol and the others could manage on their own.

Euphemia turned into a black mist. Wrapping herself around Zakuro, she attacked. The countless particles all acted according to her will. Against any other opponent, she would have been able to effortlessly infiltrate and destroy their body from within. But she did not expect it to work on him. This was no more than an attempt to blind him. By surrounding him in a black haze, she would cut off his vision of everything else. She hoped to pull his attention away from Risley as much as possible. To pull his attention towards herself.

But a moment later, she had returned to her ordinary form and was kneeling. She had no idea why.

"I don't know what you're so desperate for," Zakuro sighed. "What are you trying to do?"

Just as she had expected, her attack had done nothing. However, the fact he had taken an interest in her would buy more time. It didn't seem like her mind had been taken over yet.

Euphemia chose to remain silent. Even if he eventually forced her to

speak, the time it would take for Zakuro to make the decision to do so was enough for her. Every second she bought was another second Risley got farther away and closer to escaping.

"I believe I told you I didn't plan on harming you. Maybe you didn't understand me? I thought I had figured out your language. Maybe it's more difficult than I thought."

"Why are you here?"

"Oh! So you can talk! I suddenly noticed the Overlord appear, and when I came to see him, there were others present. I thought you might have some relation to what was going on, so I was curious." He spoke calmly, showing he didn't view Euphemia as a threat.

"I am here because I have business in a nearby city," Euphemia finally said. "There is a teleportation device here, so..." She decided that remaining silent wouldn't help her. If Zakuro decided he couldn't get any information from her, he may just try to get it from Risley.

"Hmm...it looks like you bear the Overlord's curse. That bloodline has made cities and set up teleportation devices around here, so I suppose the chances of meeting you were fairly high. But it doesn't seem our meeting is entirely coincidence."

Carol's group reached the surface, passing out of Euphemia's sphere of awareness. She couldn't say they were safe yet, but the fact that they had made it that far gave her a small bit of relief.

"So, why did you attack me? I thought I acted a lot more reasonably than most gods out there and took care not to overwhelm you with my natural presence. So could you tell me? It'll be useful information for next time."

"Your presence...is still rather overwhelming. I believed we would die just upon meeting you."

"I see. Normally I keep my presence suppressed a little more, but I had just found the Overlord after all this time. I guess I got a bit caught up with that. How is this?" As he spoke, the intense aura he was giving off suddenly receded. He still had the presence of an incredibly powerful individual, but it was much easier to bear than before. "That said, you aren't just some battle maniac who attacks anyone who looks strong, are you? I still don't understand why you attacked me."

"Shouldn't reading my mind be easy enough for someone like you?" That was a doubt she had held since he'd first asked a question of them. Someone

as powerful as Zakuro should have been able to take any information from them without needing to speak.

“I see. It appears the gods you are used to are much more arrogant and dismissive of other intelligent life forms. Please be at ease. I highly value personal freedom. I won’t do anything so rude as to read your mind against your will.”

Euphemia hesitated. Should she tell him the truth? Or would it be better to avoid talking about the others as much as possible?

“If you don’t want to talk, I won’t force you. There’s nothing I need to learn from you that badly. But what will you do now? You seem to be a devotee of this place.”

Euphemia’s will hadn’t changed at all. However, by staying here, the monster struggling behind Zakuro was clearly starting to influence her. The impulse to serve that creature with all of her being was starting to well up inside her. It was a curse. The curse that transformed a person into a vampire also engraved that command on their soul. Even as an Origin Blood, being a vampire meant she had no hope of defying the monster’s will.

“I am beginning to believe I should obey the creature you called the Overlord...”

“I see. In that case, you can come with me, but what about the others that were with you?”

“We were only traveling together because we had the same destination. Now they are unrelated to me.”

“If you’re fine with that, then okay. What’s your name?”

“I am Euphemia.”

“Now then. The first thing we should do is... Well, you see how the Overlord is acting.”

“That is awfully vague. I understand, though.”

“The part of the Overlord bearing its consciousness must be elsewhere, and he is trying to find it. We should support him.”

“Understood.”

At that moment, a thunderous roar shook the cavern as the ceiling collapsed. The monster had made it through. Ignoring everything around him, he reached up for the hole in the cavern. The falling debris crushed what little remained of the ancient city.

“I suppose we just follow it and do what needs to be done.”

Zakuro seemed to be fine with improvising as they went.

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Akira was an attendant of the Sage Yoshifumi, but he didn't do much. Normally, a Sage attendant served by assisting in the management of the Sage's territory, but Yoshifumi already had his Four Heavenly Kings. Akira had nothing to do with the management of the empire.

Luna managed the capital with her class of Architect. Her abilities allowed her to freely create, modify, and erase objects within the city. She could detect any changes to the buildings she had created, and anything that was in an area she chose to erase would be erased along with it. For that reason, she had taken on a defensive role for the city.

The rest of the empire was run by Abby, who had the class of Game Master. Turning the entire empire into a massive game board, she had made a role-playing game to be played by the adventurers. Her abilities didn't give her perfect knowledge of everything happening in the empire, but any large-scale events would automatically generate quests, so she could keep an eye on the bigger picture fairly easily. She had used that power to create a loose surveillance network across the empire. If any significant events occurred, she would be aware of them immediately and could send adventurers to go resolve them.

With these two at the helm, the empire was reasonably stable. Of course, the country also needed law and bureaucracy, but Akira had no connection to those aspects either. As a Japanese high school student who had suddenly been transported here, he didn't possess the knowledge or talent to run a nation.

Yoshifumi and Akira had been summoned to this world by a Sage. Yoshifumi had an unusually aggressive personality, so he'd had no issue taking a stand against the world, and Akira had survived just by following him around. If a Sage manifested, those who had been summoned with him or her became their attendants. For the most part, Sages didn't bring any harm on the attendants—so Akira had survived this long not because he was useful, but because Yoshifumi was following the rules.

Even so, he did have something of a role. He monitored the areas outside of Luna and Abby's vision. The Sages had an obligation to fight off the

Aggressors. For that reason, they had to continuously monitor the regions under their control, and that included the sea and sky.

That being said, Akira generally had very little on his plate. All he had to do was check the alerts given by the surveillance system, and he could spend most of his time relaxing in his room.

“I wonder what that all was about...”

He recalled the events of the other day, lying on his sofa. The surveillance system had detected something in the sky. The sky belonged to the Great Sage, so an automatic response had been initiated. But in the end, Akira didn’t know what had happened. Whatever was detected had fallen into the sea, but the Sky Castle hadn’t told him any more. The fact that it had fallen into the sea was all well and good, but he couldn’t help but be curious.

“Well, whatever. It seems like Yoshifumi didn’t care much either.”

He had reported the event to Yoshifumi just in case. The Sage was the one responsible for managing this territory, so if he decided it wasn’t worth being concerned about, there was nothing Akira could do about it. Low-level servants like the Sage’s attendants didn’t know anything about what happened up in the sky.

Upon coming to this world, those who had been summoned were made more aggressive, and their aversion to death was suppressed. Akira had been similarly affected, but it hadn’t been enough to overcome his innate cowardly nature. By staying under Yoshifumi’s protection, he could survive in this world. He wouldn’t do anything that might risk him getting expelled from Yoshifumi’s presence. Curiosity killed the cat, as they say. It would be better for him not to take an interest in things he didn’t have to.

So today, Akira was again in his room, reading a book. As an attendant, he had any number of ways of killing time. He had the authority to do more or less anything he wanted, but if he went too far, he might earn Yoshifumi’s ire. He likely wouldn’t be killed if that happened, but it was very possible that he would be sent underground to power the generators. Akira’s main priority was to maintain the status quo.

“Too bad we didn’t get control of all of Hanabusa.”

Akira had an interest in the manga published in Hanabusa. Hanabusa was a city that had been under Lain’s control, and it was a reproduction of modern Japan. After her death, Yoshifumi had fought for control over the territory with the Sage Alice, but in the end he had only managed to claim half of it.

Akira didn't know who had made the decision, but a wall had been built splitting the city in two. That had made the city all but impossible to govern, and even now it was in a state of chaos. They weren't capable of publishing manga at the moment.

"Yoshifumi is normally so aggressive. Why couldn't he do a bit more—"

As Akira mumbled a question he definitely couldn't say in Yoshifumi's hearing, his room suddenly began to shake violently. He had thought it was an earthquake, but a shrill alarm sounded from the device in his pocket. Something had been detected by the surveillance system.

Akira looked at the device. The tremors were coming from a forest near the capital. Something enormous had appeared there. He quickly looked out the window. His room was at the top of the imperial palace, so he had a view of the entire empire from here.

"What?! What is that?!"

A number of enormous heads reached up into the sky... Lion, snake, and ram heads on the ends of incredibly long necks emerged from the forest. Akira gave a shrill cry as the heads turned as one to look at him, causing his legs to all but give out under him. Perhaps the heads were not looking at him in particular, but they were definitely looking towards the capital.

And then the creature began moving towards them.

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Chapter 7 — I Feel like All Our Effort Was for Nothing

Abby's Class was Game Master, so the entirety of the Empire of Ent was under her control, but that didn't mean she knew everything that happened there at all times. It was a small island, but countless people and innumerable monsters lived there, creating a never-ending stream of new events. There was no way a single person could manage that much information, let alone deal with the events themselves.

Most of the system ran automatically. Less important events were analyzed, with the information dispatched to the local adventurer's guilds to create quests to resolve them. These quests involved things like slaying a certain number of monsters, finding medicinal herbs, or moving supplies from one town to another. Rewards were offered, so adventurers would take them on even without knowing what they were for.

Most quests appeared and were resolved all on their own. The automatic nature of resolving these irritating, smaller problems was one of the Game Master's strong points. However, not all events were small and inconsequential. Some of them required her personal attention. For example, Yoshifumi had instructed her to personally handle anything related to the royal family. He wasn't particularly worried if they were wiped out, but thinking something interesting might happen, he had ordered her to keep him up to date on their situation. So while keeping an eye on them, she managed the difficulty and rewards offered for related quests.

Another was giant monsters. Occasionally, monsters of an abnormally large size would appear. In those situations, the automatic quests generated were often insufficient to deal with them properly. So whenever a monster of a certain size appeared, Abby was notified.

Of course, anyone would notice *this* particular monster. It had appeared alongside an earthquake in a forest near the capital. From the capital, the source of the tremors was easy to identify, and anyone who looked in that

direction could easily see the creature's massive form.

Relaxing in her personal room at the time, Abby hurriedly opened her status window. The window displayed special information related to her work as a Game Master, with video feeds from various locations across the empire lined up beside each other. Abby selected one and enlarged it. The image of an enormous beast, like nothing anyone had ever seen, hovered in front of her eyes.

"What is that thing?!"

Once the creature had destroyed the surrounding forest, she was able to get a better look at it. Its enormous, round body was carried on short, fat legs. There seemed to be other leg-like appendages as well, but as they didn't touch the ground, she wasn't sure what they were for. Countless limbs ending in hooves and claws writhed around the creature's body. The upper part of the beast hosted numerous heads. A number of long necks stretched out from it, ending in heads that looked like lions, snakes, and goats. Every step it took shook the earth.

Abby looked out the window of her room. The monster was close enough that it could be seen with the naked eye. It seemed to be moving slowly, but that was likely an illusion caused by its enormous size. It would make it to the capital in no time at all.

Abby sprinted out of the room, setting up an emergency quest *(Defeat the Mysterious Giant Monster!)* as she ran. The first order of business was to send the adventurers out to intercept it. It would be great if they could defeat it, but she knew that was likely not going to happen. The creature's size was too extreme. It would sweep aside ordinary adventurers effortlessly.

She considered the possibility that this was an Aggressor. If that were the case, Yoshifumi would be the only one who could deal with it, but he had yet to return from the Elven Forest, and she had no way of contacting him. She could have sent him a message directly if he was still in the empire, but the forest had a barrier that repelled supernatural powers.

"Why did something weird like this happen *now?!*"

The creature had appeared while Yoshifumi was gone. Why would the creature show up now of all times?

Abby cursed her bad luck. If she left things as they were, the military would likely move to intervene. She didn't know much about them, so she felt it was best to let them do their thing. All she could do was fulfill her role

as one of the Four Heavenly Kings.

She burst into Luna's room. "You know what's going on?"

"Of course. It would be kind of hard not to notice," Luna answered.

Abby stepped up alongside Luna, who was staring out the window. Naturally, she was looking at the enormous creature. It had nearly made it to the city already.

"Is there anything you can do about it?"

"Hmmm. I can only use my powers inside the city, so we'll need to draw it inside the walls somehow."

Luna could freely create and erase anything within the capital. No matter how strong the creature was, if it was swept up in the process, it would vanish. Within the capital, Luna was effectively invincible, so if they allowed the creature inside the walls, they could get rid of it. Any buildings it destroyed could be rebuilt in an instant. The only real problem was the cost of human life, but Abby didn't care much about that. Ruling the Empire of Ent was no more than a game to Yoshifumi and his Four Heavenly Kings.

"Don't run away, got it?" Luna said. She had to remain in the capital no matter what. She must have been afraid the whole problem would be dumped on her shoulders.

"I don't think this is a big enough problem to force us to run away."

"Why do you think it's here?"

"Probably to eat people or something? It came out of the forest, so if it wanted a lot of people, this is the closest place. Let's try something."

Abby set a gathering point to the creature's right, creating a quest that would reward anyone for going there. Almost immediately, adventurers began pouring out of the capital, rushing to the spot. It was far enough from the creature that it didn't seem too dangerous, so those who didn't feel they were able to fight all rushed there. At first glance it seemed like she was doing something humane like evacuating the locals, but of course that was not her intention.

"It doesn't seem like it cares about eating."

The monster continued pressing forward. Despite the surge of people leaving the capital, the creature wasn't paying them any mind.

"So it's interested in this place? But why?"

"This palace is the same one used by the previous royal family. Maybe there's something here it wants?"

“In that case, wouldn’t it be better to have everyone run away? I can just make another city.”

Though it would take a bit of preparation, Luna could create a new capital city in a different place. She could only use her power in a designated territory, but she could reset that designation and pick another location if she had to.

“That’ll be our last resort. Yoshifumi’s pretty obsessed with this area, since it’s where the old royal family ruled.”

The Sage enjoyed playing the part of an evil emperor. He used the old palace for himself in hopes that the royal family would come back and attempt to reclaim their country. If they just gave up and abandoned this spot without a fight, they had no idea what Yoshifumi would do to them. Although they were his Four Heavenly Kings, he had no qualms about replacing them and had done so countless times. If they died, he could replace them in an instant.

“Then I guess it’s time for Mission Two.” Mission One had been gathering everyone outside the walls of the capital. Mission Two would involve sending them to fight the monster. But setting the condition to be the monster’s defeat would be too high of a threshold, so instead Abby set the reward to be based on a contribution system. Inflicting damage, healing, or giving support would earn them points, and those points could later be traded in for money. That way, anyone could earn something by contributing at least a little, and those who worked hard would earn a lot, so there shouldn’t be any complaints.

The adventurers advanced on the creature from its flank. Rather than taking the monster on in close quarters combat, they began pelting it from a distance with arrows and magic.

“Doesn’t look like it’s having any effect,” Luna observed.

“Damn. I was hoping they’d at least get its attention.”

The arrows bounced off the creature’s skin, not one managing to penetrate. Fire magic burned through its scales and ice magic tore at its flesh, but with the creature’s size, the scale of the attacks was barely enough to count as a scratch. Furthermore, the wounds they caused healed instantly. The hail of small attacks couldn’t amount to any sort of meaningful damage.

The monster continued heading for the city as if unaware of the adventurers’ attacks. While the worthless assault continued, another wave of

attacks came at the creature from head on.

The capital was surrounded by enormous walls. On top of those walls were mounted large fire-spewing cannons. Of course, every single shot landed. The target was so large, it was almost impossible to miss. But those shots seemed just as pointless as the ones before them, with the monster continuing forward unharmed. The imperial army also began using large-scale ritual magic, but despite being the most powerful of their attacks so far, they still didn't seem to be able to inflict any real damage.

Abby quickly gave up. "I guess it's up to you, Luna. Nothing we do seems to work."

"What? Isn't there anything else you can try?"

"Not in this situation."

"Fine. If it gets into the city, I should be able to do something about it."

The creature stepped up to the city walls and came to a stop. As they watched to see what it would do, it raised its numerous heads high into the air before swinging them down with great force. The massive impact shook the walls of the city and threw Luna and Abby from their feet.

"What the?! What is it doing?!" cried Abby.

It was the first attack from the monster itself. It was lifting its heads up into the air and swinging them down. Meanwhile, other heads spat fire, breathed lightning, and launched spikes. In the blink of an eye, the stretch of city before the creature was reduced to rubble.

After unleashing its wave of destruction, it began moving again. It seemed to be heading for the castle at the heart of the city after all. In other words, it was heading straight towards Abby and Luna.

"Luna, hurry up and get rid of it!"

"It takes time to activate this, and I need it to be a bit closer..."

The monster continued towards them, tearing apart the city walls and setting the streets ablaze. The imperial army was doing its best to slow the creature's advance, but it was like nothing more than throwing drops of water on a blazing fire.

"Now!"

Luna erased a section of the city, and with it the core of the monster vanished without a sound. About a third of the creature had disappeared. With a large chunk in the middle of its body gone, the front and back collapsed immediately. A tidal wave of blood poured from the remains as the

pieces fell to the ground.

"Got it!"

"Yeah. It didn't really have a chance once it passed the walls."

"Hurry up and erase the rest of it."

"That's easier said than done. I can only erase in blocks, and doing it so quickly in succession is—"

Abby began to doubt her eyes. Bubbles started to form around the cleanly cut ends of the monster's remains as it lay in the streets before countless tubes sprang out. The tubes reached out and connected the two remaining pieces of the creature, tying together into a thick cord. They then dragged the two remaining pieces of the creature towards each other, knitting them back together. Legs sprouted, lifting the beast back up. Unleashing a terrifying roar, the monster began to grow even larger.

"Hurry up and erase the whole thing!"

"I can't! It's too big! It doesn't fit into a single block!"

"Do it anyway! Okay, just erase the head!"

"I'll try!"

The monster began its march forward again. As if stimulated by the injuries, it seemed more agitated than before. Flailing its heads around with a roar, it sprayed the surrounding city with bodily fluids and chunks of meat, destroying everything in its path.

The front of the monster suddenly disappeared, and it collapsed once more. Though it was hard to tell where the creature's front was, this time the portion with the heads had been removed.

"Hurry up! Erase the rest of it!"

"I told you, I can't! Trying harder or being in a hurry won't reduce the cooldown time!"

Abby and Luna stared impatiently out the window. Bubbles spewed forth from the creature's open wounds as the flesh began to reform. The lost heads were regenerated in an instant, the creature letting loose a furious howl.

"There's nothing I can do..."

Luna's face twisted with despair. It was easy to guess how the situation would unfold. Her power could only erase things one block at a time. She had to wait a fixed amount of time before using her power again. She couldn't erase a creature that big all at once. If any of it remained, it would regenerate whatever was lost. It would never end.

“No, we don’t know if it can regenerate forever! We might be able to win by trying over and over!”

“I’ll try, but it doesn’t look like it’s getting any weaker, does it?!”

The monster continued its advance. Luna’s power activated, erasing another chunk. It again stopped to regenerate before continuing on. It was the same thing all over again. They were managing to buy some time, but they wouldn’t be able to keep this up for much longer. Even if the beast couldn’t regenerate forever, there didn’t seem to be any sign that it was running low on whatever energy it needed to do so.

Luna finally gave in. “This is impossible. I can’t do anything to stop it.”

“We’ll have to run. Either Yoshifumi will kill us or that thing will. I think our chances are better betting on Yoshifumi’s mercy.”

“I find it hard to believe Yoshifumi will forgive us for tucking our tails and running just because something powerful showed up.”

But with no other options for dealing with the creature, there was no point in sitting around twiddling their thumbs.

“Okay, let’s go. We’ll worry about what happens next later!” Abby said before stopping herself. “Actually, what about Akira?”

“He probably ran away a long time ago.”

“No, knowing him, he’s probably cowering in a corner and sobbing somewhere. Let’s grab him if we see him.”

Abby and Luna left the room. They were at the top of the palace, the place reserved for the leaders of the empire. Akira also lived nearby, so if he hadn’t run away yet, there was a good chance he was still in his room. Luna continued her attacks on the creature as they headed there.

Abby kicked the door in, revealing Akira staring out the window, frozen.

“So, the coward’s still here after all.”

Akira let out a high-pitched wail, turning at the sound of Abby’s voice.

“Hey, what’s your problem? Am I that ugly?”

“N-No, th-that’s not it, I was just surprised...”

“Akira, what are you doing standing around in a situation like this?”

“Ummm, I *am* doing something. I’ve called for reinforcements from the Sky Castle, and the defense system—”

“Oh, just shut up!” Abby pulled Luna into the room, stepping up to Akira and delivering a kick to his stomach. He folded with a cry, dropping to his knees.

Abby kept kicking at him on the ground. As she did, a howl unlike anything they'd heard before came from outside. It was loud enough to shake the entire palace, powerful enough that anyone standing near the source may well have been killed by it.

"Oh, it's working," Abby said.

"That's not going to do anything but buy us time, though."

"Don't you think it's worth trying? It might decide it's not worth the effort and run away."

Akira's class was Dastard. His primary ability was to inflict half of the damage he took on someone else. If he was attacked, the damage would be transferred not to the attacker, but to an entirely unrelated third party. In this case, Abby was attacking him, so the most likely candidate was Luna, but since they were holding hands, the power treated them as one person. With no one else around, the next closest target to Akira was the enormous monster outside.

Of course, Abby kicking Akira wouldn't inflict enough damage for the monster to even notice, so what had made it scream? It was the pain. Akira's pain was directly transferred to the target. No matter how resilient they were, the effect was based on how Akira felt. If he felt like he was in enough pain that he might die, enough pain would be inflicted on the target to engender the same feelings.

"S-Stop, stop!" Akira wailed.

"You're finally useful, though. I should try a bit harder." Abby grabbed Akira by the collar and lifted him to his feet. She didn't possess any special abilities for close-quarters combat, but in raw strength she was already stronger than he was.

"So, what do we do? Are we just going to run away?"

"Let's try breaking one of his arms. Then the pain transfer will be constant."

"Nooooo! Why are you doing this to me?!"

"Come on, the empire is in huge trouble right now. A leader like you should be risking your life to save it."

"Who cares?! I'm not a leader or an attendant because I wanted to be! Just leave me alone! Inflicting pain on that thing will only slow it down! There's no way we can beat something like—"

An intense pain suddenly flooded Abby's body. The blinding agony

caused her to drop Akira, but the pain was such that she was beyond caring.

"Wh-What...?" The next thing she knew, she was lying on the floor with Luna, where they had both been writhing in pain. The feeling was already gone, but her thoughts were still in disarray. The pain's departure flooded her with a relief that made thinking impossible.

It took her a little while to realize that Akira's power had been turned against her. Someone other than Abby and Luna had attacked him.

"I looked all over the world for it, but I guess we couldn't find it because it was sealed away. I feel like all our effort was for nothing."

Abby looked up at the source of the voice. A boy with wings was standing there, Akira's head dangling from his hand.

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Chapter 8 — My Skin Is Quite Smooth, and I Possess a Floral Aroma!

Haruto Ootori had, at Zakuro's instruction, been searching for a being known as the Overlord with no knowledge of what it looked like. He had traveled around the world, searching for the remains of settlements with ancient histories, ruins from ages long past, and places with signs that powerful gods had once inhabited them. But all of that had been essentially pointless. There would be no sign of the Overlord until the seal holding it was released.

That seal hadn't been released by Haruto or even by Zakuro himself. It had come undone all of its own accord. It made all their desperate searching seem like a fool's errand, like wasted effort.

"Who the hell are you?!" the taller woman barked from her spot on the ground. She seemed rather coarse, but the fact that she was still in the city trying to defend it meant she was likely a person of some authority. The other, smaller girl was still facedown on the floor.

"Haruto Ootori."

"What?!"

"I'm just answering your question. I may have killed your friend here, but if you cooperate, I won't hurt you."

With the appearance of the Overlord, Haruto had answered Zakuro's summons. When he had made it to the sky above Ent, he was given explicit orders. Following those instructions, he had wiped out the angelic beings descending on the capital and killed the one attacking the Overlord from within the palace.

"Like hell! What do you think you're doing, attacking us out of nowhere?!"

"I could tell he was using some sort of ability." Haruto held up the head in his hand. "If there was some way to disable it, I would have, but I didn't know how, so I just killed him. I needed to stop him pretty quickly. But I

have no intention of harming anyone else. So what will you do?"

"The Overlord is receiving a kind of mental attack, so go deal with it." That was the only instruction Haruto had received. He had no intention of killing anyone besides the source of that attack.

"Are you related to the beast?"

"Seems that way. I don't know the details, though." He had only arrived after the Overlord was reborn. He hadn't even met Zakuro yet, so he didn't know anything about the situation.

"What does it want?"

"I have no idea. I'm still waiting for an explanation myself." He was discussing things with the woman here in hopes that she wouldn't get desperate and attack him. He could have just attacked her first, but he wanted to avoid unnecessary fighting.

"'I don't know!' 'No idea!' Are you screwing with me?!"

"Sorry, but I'm just a pawn here."

"You asked what we'd do? So you plan on letting us go?"

"I've already done what I was told to do. I never heard anything about you."

He wasn't just a child running errands, so it may have been best for him to use his own judgment and act as the situation dictated. But Haruto had no idea what was going on or what he was being made to do. He had no idea what the smart choice was in this situation. If he killed them now, it was just as likely he'd be told later that he shouldn't have. So he wanted to avoid doing anything outside his direct orders.

The palace shook. The monster had begun moving again. Haruto understood that it was the Overlord, the higher god Zakuro had been looking for. He had been given the ability to detect its presence. It was an absolutely necessary skill if he was to help in Zakuro's search.

The Overlord was heading towards the castle. At this rate, the building would be reduced to rubble.

"Okay, I'm leaving now. Do you want to come with me?"

"Luna!" the taller woman called out to her companion.

Haruto had a bad feeling. This "Luna" was trying to do something, so he immediately flew off. He didn't want to fight, but that didn't mean he'd sit there and let them attack him. After getting far enough away, he turned back to look at the palace. It looked strange, like a square had been cut out of the

middle of it.

“I see. So she can erase an area in a cube.”

His mission complete, he had only talked with his apparent enemies out of curiosity. He had no intention of continuing his conversation with them if they were going to attack him.

Haruto landed at the entrance to the city. He was fast. He could reach anywhere he could see in an instant.

“Thanks. Normally, a mental attack like that wouldn’t work on it, but it’s already in a state of confusion. That must have made things worse.” Standing atop a pile of rubble was Zakuro and a woman. Haruto had never seen her before.

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“So, what exactly have I been doing this whole time?”

“I didn’t know what state the Overlord was in or if it was even in this world at all,” Zakuro replied, unfazed by Haruto’s grumbling.

Zakuro’s only clue that the Overlord was in this world was that the version of Battlesong, the system that gave the people of this world their skills, used by the locals could be dated to the time of the Overlord’s disappearance. It was flimsy evidence at best.

“Who is this?”

“Her name is Euphemia. She bears an old curse made by the Overlord. To put it in terms you would understand, she’s a kind of vampire.”

Euphemia bowed her head. He didn’t know exactly what her situation was, but it seemed she was in a similar predicament to Haruto.

“So, what is the Overlord doing?” Haruto asked. The conglomeration of various animal parts was tearing a path through the city, the ground shaking with each step it took. It seemed to be looking for something, but Haruto had no idea what.

“No idea,” Zakuro answered plainly.

“You don’t know?”

“If the Overlord wants to go in that direction, there is nothing for us to do but assist it.”

“You said it was in a state of confusion earlier. Shouldn’t we prioritize bringing it back to its senses?”

“Hmm. Though that idea is not without merit, it would involve stepping into the Overlord’s mind. That would be rather rude.”

“So we leave it alone until it calms down?”

“That’s right. For now, we just watch.”

As they spoke, the monster reached the palace. At some point, the residents of the city had stopped fighting back. Either they had realized their attempts were futile, or they had all been killed.

With a tremendous sound, the monster suddenly vanished.

“What...”

Haruto thought it was an attack from Luna, but he could still detect the Overlord nearby. Zakuro didn’t seem particularly concerned either, so there was likely nothing to worry about.

Haruto flew up into the sky to get a better look. “Looks like it fell.”

The area around the palace had collapsed. A large, dark hole had taken its

place, dropping everything nearby, including the Overlord, underground.

“Hmm. There appears to be something over there. I guess we will have to go take a look.”

As Zakuro and Euphemia began walking, Haruto landed alongside them. “Can you not fly or teleport freely, Lord Zakuro?”

“If I was going to do that, what would be the point of taking the form of a human?”

“Is that what it is?”

The three of them walked through the rubble of the city.

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Yogiri’s group headed for the port town. They were flying using Luu’s powers of telekinesis.

“Uh, the hydra disappeared!”

“Huh? What happened?” Yogiri had thought they were done talking about the monster, but at Hanakawa’s words he turned around. Just as Hanakawa had said, the monster was nowhere to be seen.

“Perhaps while we were not watching, Sir Takatou thought, ‘Good grief, I have to do something after all,’ and slew the creature?!”

“Why would I do that? Using my power is tiring. I wouldn’t do it for no reason.”

“Ohh? That is the first I have heard about that. Is there perhaps a chance that if you use it too much, you will be unable to move?”

“Yeah, I get really sleepy.”

“In that case, if you were subjected to the effects of that parasite that lulls you into a deep sleep, afflicting you with total paralysis, could even the all-powerful Sir Takatou be defeated?”

“No, if something like that happened, I’d wake up.”

“Then you are just plain invincible! What is with you?!”

“Hanakawa, Takatou is just like that.” Tomochika seemed to fully agree with him.

“So the monster’s gone. If things calm down, then we have nothing to worry about, right?”

“Hmm. It looks like the attacks stopped too. Did they beat it?” Tomochika looked out over the city. At this distance, the capital just looked like a

shadow to Yogiri, but Tomochika could see it clearly.

"Yoshifumi's subordinates were in the capital, so they probably did something to the creature, right?" Yogiri suggested.

"Those angel things disappeared at some point too."

"Yes, shortly before the hydra vanished, they all fell from the sky," Hanakawa explained.

"I see. Seems like there's a lot going on."

"Is that all you have to say?! There is without a doubt some intense drama happening in that city! Are you sure you do not wish to go see it?!"

"If you want to see it so badly, you can just go," Yogiri said with a sigh.

"No! I will no longer separate myself from you! This is clearly the safest place!"

"It may be safe, but you'll probably get wrapped up in some weird stuff if you stick with us," Tomochika warned him.

"Even taking that into consideration, staying with you is my greatest chance of surviving! That is what I have decided!"

"Well, if you're fine with it, then okay," Tomochika said, recoiling slightly at Hanakawa's fervent declaration.

"Dropping in from the sky would probably stand out too much, so let's land outside the city," Yogiri instructed Luu as they approached the port town.

She brought them down in the forest nearby.

"This city seems to be in a bit of an uproar too. Do you think they'll still have ships going?" asked Tomochika.

"It does not appear this town has received any damage, so it should be okay. I suppose any ships will be flooded with refugees from the capital shortly, though. We should make haste, otherwise that may slow us down considerably," Mokomoko answered.

The port town was a considerable distance from the capital, but a large portion of those fleeing the city would likely end up there. If a lot of people were trying to escape, the port would quickly be overwhelmed.

"Even at such a distance, with the capital under siege, this town will no doubt feel the effects of it," Hanakawa commented.

"I'm tired..." Luu announced, dropping to the ground.

"I guess getting across the ocean that way is not going to happen, then," said Yogiri.

Being able to carry them a few kilometers to reach this place was impressive in its own right, but it didn't seem like Luu would be able to get them all the way across the ocean.

"I can't do it now, so you should look for more parts of my body, daddy."

"More Philosopher's Stones, huh? The idea of more stones making Luu more useful is interesting, but we wanted to go across the ocean to find them in the first place."

Yoshifumi was the only Sage on this island, Yogiri had heard. They had no need to remain on Ent any longer.

"Speaking of which, I feel that Luu referring to Sir Takatou as 'daddy' is being somewhat ignored here," Hanakawa interrupted.

"If that's what she wants to call me, I don't mind." Though he'd been a bit hesitant at first, it wasn't enough that Yogiri would try to make her stop.

"If we just need money, both we and Hanakawa have plenty, so getting a boat to the mainland should be easy enough."

"Ohh! So now my wealth is a target!"

"If you're going to stick with us, you can at least pay your way."

"Then you intend to acquire a VIP ticket to leave this country whose future is in jeopardy, using bundles of cash to wipe the sweat from your brow!"

"You make us sound terrible!"

"Anyway, let's get going. We can't stick around here forever."

"Daddy, carry me!"

"No." Though he didn't mind if she called him 'daddy,' he wasn't planning on indulging her any more than that. Even if she looked like a young girl, she was nothing more to him than the grotesque result of the Philosopher's Stones' transformation.

"Why?! You carried me before!"

"That was because you were a baby. You can walk now, so walk."

"After she brought you this far, you treat her so coldly? I suppose there is nothing that can be done. I will have to—"

"No! Not you!"

"Why not?!"

"You look slimy."

"I am not in the least! I assure you my skin is quite smooth, and I possess a floral aroma!"

“Uh, that’s somehow still bad.”

“You too, Tomochika?!”

“Stop complaining and let’s go.” Yogiri started walking. Since they had come in from the sky, they knew the general direction of the town.

Emerging from the forest, the port town was immediately visible. The others followed quickly behind him. Luu was walking, pouting all the way.

Like most inhabited places in this world, the capital was protected by a wall. The large gates were letting almost everyone through. There were guards on duty, but they didn’t seem to be checking everyone who passed. Things weren’t jammed up with refugees from the capital yet, so it seemed they could get in without issue.

As Yogiri thought that, a guard stepped in his way. He assumed they were just inspecting people at random as he looked at the guards gathering around him.

“You! Are you Yogiri Takatou?!”

“Yeah?”

“Then die!”

The guards surged towards him. But the next moment, they were all blown away.

“Leave daddy alone!”

Luu had protected him. If she had been even slightly slower, Yogiri would have killed them all.

“It’s him... Yogiri Takatou...”

“And that’s Tomochika Dannoura beside him...”

“The enemies of God...”

“We need to do something...anything...”

Even the ordinary passersby began to glare at them.

“Huh? Why are they looking at us like that?!” Tomochika demanded.

“Uhh, do you not recall?” Hanakawa answered. “With the way you have nonchalantly slain all those who stood in your path on your way here, I believe it is quite obvious why these people might glare at you.”

“I mean...true, but we’ve never even been *here!*” Tomochika protested. Yogiri had earned the ire of plenty of people, but they hadn’t done anything on the east side of Ent yet.

“Do they already know about Yoshifumi’s death?” Mokomoko muttered. Putting aside whether the people liked the Sage, it wouldn’t be strange for

them to respond with hostility to someone who was responsible for their emperor's death.

"Luu, I know you're tired, but can you get us out of here?"

"Yeah!"

As she replied, they found themselves floating up into the air, flying a considerable distance backward. Before long, they were in the forest again.

"This is a little bad," Yogiri remarked.

"There's nothing little about it!" Hanakawa shouted in reply. "This is no time to be speaking of taking a cruise to another land!"

"But what do we do? We're in a pretty rough spot, aren't we?"

"That's right. This is pretty bad. I was totally surprised too."

Yogiri turned at the sound of a voice from outside their group and found a familiar face. Carol S. Lane and Ryouko Ninomiya stood behind them. Ryouko was holding Risley, making their group a trio.

"What? Why are you here, Carol?" Tomochika asked.

"We followed you."

"How?!"

"I think we can talk about that later. For now, this is the problem." Carol stepped closer, handing them two pieces of paper. Fairly accurate pictures of Yogiri and Tomochika were printed on them.

"Huh? What's this?" Tomochika had no idea what she was looking at.

"These are posted all over the city."

"What?!"

"You're all wanted by the Malnarilna sect. Apparently all of their believers have been told to kill you on sight."

"Excuse me?"

"Them again?" Yogiri sighed. Malna and Rilna. They were similar enough that he didn't know which was which, but he had definitely killed one of them. He couldn't help but agree that killing one of their gods was a good reason for the people to hate him.

Chapter 9 — This Is Absolutely Absurd! What Is This, Some Kind of Lolicon Harem?!

“Dammit! Where’d they go?!”

“They definitely went into the forest!”

“Search everywhere! At worst, we can burn down the whole thing!”

A crowd of people rushed into the forest where Tomochika’s group had fled, trying to hunt them down. All sorts of people were looking for them. Of course there were soldiers, but even sailors, shopkeepers, and children who looked like they had no place taking part in such violence were in a frenzy.

Meanwhile, their group was hiding in the tops of the trees. Sensing the approach of the townspeople, they had hurriedly climbed to safety. Luckily, they had Luu with them, so ascending wasn’t especially challenging.

Yogiri, Tomochika, Mokomoko inside the Enju robot, Hanakawa, the girl made from Philosopher’s Stones, who they had named Luu, Carol S. Lane, Ryouko, and Risley were all hiding among the branches.

“This is kind of terrible, isn’t it?”

With all the conflict they had experienced, Tomochika had grown used to people acting hostile towards them. But it was the first time she had been faced with such blatant hatred.

“They flew here, so make sure you check the trees as well!”

At those words, their pursuers began looking upward. One of them met eyes with Tomochika.

“Ack! There they...aren’t?”

The speaker had definitely looked directly at her, but they couldn’t seem to see her.

“Don’t worry, I’ve put up my ninja barrier,” Carol remarked offhandedly.

“That’s an awfully convenient skill!”

It didn’t seem like she had done anything special, but she had used her

powers to hide them. There was no guarantee the pursuers wouldn't have skills of their own that would allow them to see through it, but for now it looked like it was keeping the group hidden.

"I am most impressed, Sir Takatou. Despite their clear intent to do us harm, I am glad to see you have not mercilessly slaughtered them all."

"It's fine since we got away, but if they attack us, I'll have to kill them."

Even though their pursuers were common townsfolk, if they attacked, Tomochika knew their group would have no choice but to defend themselves.

"Now then, maybe while being chased like this isn't the time, but we're safe enough for the moment, so let's talk," Carol continued.

Tomochika couldn't shake her feeling of awkwardness. She and Yogiri had left the other three behind without a word. They had more or less decided they were only going to try to get themselves back home, which was basically the same as leaving the others for dead. Yogiri had made the decision to cut them off without a second thought, but Tomochika's conscience wasn't quite so forgiving.

"A-About what?"

"Why don't we work together?" Carol suggested. "You're totally lost right now, aren't you? It's not like we know what to do either, but we've got some clues."

"I don't mind working together, but to what end?" Yogiri answered, not concerned in the least about their previous history.

"We want to stick with you, Takatou. And if we can, we want to go back to our home world, so I guess we should work together to do that?"

"That works for you and Ryouko, but what about Risley?" Yogiri didn't know why the young girl was with them, but he couldn't imagine she shared their goals.

"U-Umm...I also want to stay with you. Is that okay?"

"So what, should we consider you guys a group of three then?" Tomochika asked.

"I guess so. We can't just leave Risley out in the cold, so that's probably best."

"All right. I guess we don't have any other choice here." Although he didn't seem happy about it, Yogiri reluctantly agreed to work with them.

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“And that’s basically what happened!” Carol gave them a rough explanation of how they had gotten here. In short, they had used the teleportation devices set up by Lain to reach the island, where they had encountered a monster and fled.

“Wait, so you left Euphemia behind?! Is she okay?!” Tomochika was worried. According to their story, they had left her in a pretty dangerous spot.

“No idea, but Risley’s safety was clearly her number one priority, so we were working based on that.”

“I guess she is like the ultimate vampire, so she wouldn’t die that easily...”

“Anyway, we got to the port town and found posters with your faces on them everywhere. I put my ninja skills to work gathering information and found out you were wanted by the Malnarilna sect.”

“Is it that big of a religion?” Yogiri, since he knew little about the sect himself.

“They are the second-largest religion in the world. You can find them in any city.”

“So...we can’t walk around in the open anymore?”

“You won’t be able to walk around secretly either. There are plenty of believers in the criminal underworld too, and anyone who finds you, captures you, or kills you will get a huge reward. They’re all pretty determined. The sect has mobilized all their members to try and kill you.”

“I see. So our plan to take a boat off the island—”

“That will probably be quite difficult.”

“Then what are we supposed to do?!” Tomochika asked.

“What do you think?” Yogiri had no ideas, so he turned the question back on her. It didn’t seem like they could secure passage on a ship, and it didn’t look like Luu would be able to carry them far enough herself.

“Perhaps we could attempt to ride as stowaways? I imagine the power of a ninja would make that possible,” Hanakawa suggested.

Carol shot the suggestion down immediately. “No. Hiding a few people in an open forest is totally different from trying to do it on a crowded boat.”

“What about just acquiring a ship of our own?” Mokomoko suggested. “Soaring through the air would be quite hard on Luu, but it may be easier if we just had her push a ship through the water. And in that case, she would be able to rest if needed.”

At the moment, only Yogiri and Tomochika were wanted, so with Carol

and the others' help, they might be able to get a boat. They had plenty of money, so a ship plus a few days' worth of supplies shouldn't have been difficult.

"Umm, can I ask something?" Risley finally broke her silence and spoke up. "Can we go save Euphemia? With Yogiri's power..."

"Is that part of us working together?"

"How cold can you be, Sir Takatou?!" Hanakawa exclaimed. "Do you intend to abandon a lost companion so easily?!"

"I mean, we weren't really all that close."

"No, no, no! Though I only saw her briefly, she was an incredibly powerful vampire and possessed a phenomenal beauty, did she not?! We should be rushing headlong to rescue someone like that without paying any mind to the consequences, setting all sorts of flags along the way! Could I perhaps ask you to start acting more like a protagonist?!"

"Uh, actually, it would be kind of an issue if Euphemia ended up becoming a rival for me," Risley added shyly, reminding Tomochika of how she had asked Yogiri to marry her the first time they met.

"Hold on! Daddy belongs to me!" Luu stepped in front of her with a glare. She must have figured out Risley's feelings towards him.

"Huh? Umm...who is this?" Risley asked.

"Her name is Luu. The Philosopher's Stone you gave me merged with a few others and turned into her."

"*What?! How?!*"

"No idea," Yogiri shrugged.

Tomochika had just sort of accepted the situation, but it was true that it was pretty strange.

"Gaaaaaah! Both Luu and Risley have fallen for Sir Takatou?! This is absolutely absurd! What is this, some kind of lolicon harem?!" Hanakawa cried.

"Uhh, their ages would make that kind of an issue. It's a crime in any world, right? If he's going to have a harem, it should be with the rest of us."

"If you're making a harem, could you leave me out?" Ryouko said unhappily. "Watching him may be my mission, but I'm not that interested in him besides that. In fact, my mission is specifically to avoid getting too attached to him..."

"Umm! Getting back on track," Risley interrupted, "I don't think saving

Euphemia is bad for you either, Takatou. With her help, we can use the teleportation devices, so we should be able to go anywhere you want!"

"Oh, really?"

"Yes. There are teleportation devices set up near every major city, so we can get almost anywhere."

"You said Lain set them up, right? Can you not use them, Risley?"

"I'm not really proud of it, but I don't have any powers of my own! You need magic or something to use them, and I wouldn't know how anyway."

"I see. I guess it might be worth saving her, then?"

"Hmm...stowing away or acquiring our own vessel would both come with risks," Mokomoko mused. "If we could avoid both with these teleportation devices, that would be much safer. I am sure there are still risks with teleporting, but adding that to our list seems like an intelligent choice."

Their options now were to either send Carol and the others to acquire a ship and spend a long time at sea, or to save Euphemia and use the teleportation devices.

"Okay then, can you guys go and get a boat for us?" Yogiri asked. "While you do that, we'll go get Euphemia."

In that case, they should try doing both. Having multiple ways off the island would improve their chances.

"But we have no idea where Miss Euphemia is, do we?" Hanakawa asked.

"They got separated in some underground ruins near the capital, so we'll just have to start there. What are you going to do, Hanakawa?"

"Ugh...as my face has not yet become known to the public, I feel I should avoid working with Sir Takatou. If I come to be recognized as a companion of his, all believers in Malnarilna across the world may come to view me as an enemy, and I would lose my ability to live peacefully in this world. But no, if I intend to return to our world with you, there is no issue being lumped together with you. But if I were able to build a harem, my chance of living a proper life all but drops to zero. In that case, perhaps it would be best to go our separate ways so that I might find some beautiful women to pamper me in this world..."

"Well, figure it out before we leave." Yogiri left Hanakawa to argue with himself. "Where were the ruins?"

"Under the forest to the west of us. They're really close to the capital, so you should be able to find them easily enough."

Tomochika recalled the scenery they had seen during their flight. There was in fact a forest near the monster that had been attacking the capital.

“So how do we get there from here?”

“We could just fly...but they’d probably see us, wouldn’t they?” Yogiri looked down. Their pursuers were still scouring the entire forest. More of them had arrived, so the moment they left Carol’s barrier, they would probably be discovered. If they got attacked, they’d be forced to defend themselves, but Tomochika didn’t feel that killing their way out of this situation was the correct move.

“I guess we should wait here for a bit. If they don’t find us for a while, they might decide we’ve left the forest and look for us elsewhere.”

“Actually, is there a way we can move the barrier with us as we go?” Tomochika asked Carol. That would be enough to get them safely out of the forest.

“No. If it was just me, I could sneak out, but the barrier is fixed in place.”

“Wait, if I were to conceal my face while I stayed with you, I could act as the mysterious healer, and when a young woman gets into trouble, I could throw off my disguise...” Hanakawa was still mumbling to himself.

“Do you think they’ll give up?” Yogiri asked.

It didn’t seem like the people were being forced to search against their will. They were all desperately seeking their targets, bent on avenging their god. Even if the group escaped the current situation, things would be difficult if Malnarilna’s followers were behaving like this everywhere they went.

As Tomochika started feeling dejected about their future prospects, there was a change in their pursuers.

“Wh-What is that?!”

“I don’t know! What’s happening?!”

The people began to panic. Fear, impatience, and confusion filled the air around them. They were all looking in one direction, so Tomochika turned to see what they were staring at. After a short while, she saw a black humanoid shape covered entirely in blades slowly approaching the townspeople below.

One of the pursuers charged the monster with a roar. He must have been unable to sit still with that horrifying thing standing in front of him. Maybe sitting still and doing nothing would have been the correct answer, but instead, the man swung a weapon down, prompting the creature to take action.

The result was what anyone would have expected. The monster swung its arms, its terrifyingly sharp blades neatly bisecting the man. No matter how devout the believers looking for Yogiri and Tomochika were, there was no way they could keep up the search with that creature around. As one, the mob scattered.

"Wait...that's the thing we saw in the tower, isn't it?" Tomochika said.

"That's the one that came from underground and killed that goddess," Yogiri confirmed.

Back at the tower, where the selection trials for the Knights of the Divine King were being held, they had tried to go into the basement, but the stairway had gone on forever. As they were wondering what to do, the looped space seemed to be sliced apart and a monster covered in blades had soared past them. It had headed to the surface and killed the goddess there before running off.

"Why is it here, of all places?"

The creature let out a bloodcurdling howl, just like when they were at the tower. It had howled, and then space itself had been cut apart. The same thing happened again now. With a snapping sound, space seemed to split. At least, that was how Tomochika perceived what was happening.

"Uh oh! The ninja barrier!" Carol cried out. Anyone could tell that the invisible walls protecting them were useless in this situation.

The monster looked up at them. There were two red lights on its face, which were likely its eyes. It was definitely looking at them. Its face looked more like a mask, totally unchanging, but somehow, it looked like it was smiling.

"Takatou—"

Before Tomochika could say anything more, it moved. Its blades cut through space itself. Being up in a tree was no protection. The shock wave from the creature's blades blew past her. It had unleashed an attack, but Yogiri hadn't retaliated. That must have meant it was attacking someone other than the two of them. But who?

Tomochika turned around and found that Luu had been split in half.

Chapter 10 — Interlude: I Feel Bad for Yogiri, but I'll Have to Leave Things as They Are

"I visited all the believers across the world in their dreams!"

"I gave everyone pictures of them! Now even those who aren't believers will know about them!"

"I put a monetary reward out, so now everyone across the world should start hunting them!"

"The assassination requests failed."

"Even though you paid ten quadrillion credits? What a waste of money!"

"No, the reward was only going to be paid out if they succeeded, so we didn't lose anything!"

"What about Mother?! Did she smash that Kouryu guy?"

"She went home for some reason."

"Well, we've done basically all we can, so I guess all that's left is to go to the core of the world!"

They were angels. Created by Malnarilna, they were servants who could be called a manifestation of Malnarilna's will. But at this point they were basically going wild. After Malnarilna's death, there was no one left to give them orders, so they had made up what they believed their previous master would have wanted and did their best to make it come true.

Malnarilna was nothing if not chaotic, and its angels had inherited that personality trait thoroughly. They headed to the heart of the world, where they could access the world's core and thus influence it as a whole. It existed on a different layer than the one people lived on, like it was in a different dimension.

To the angels, it looked like a sea of light. There was a flow within it, creating a path that connected to the core. Though the world could be managed from the Heavenly Throne, they had to use the core for changes that

would impact everything at once.

Of course, there was a great deal of security barring the way. Without breaking through numerous defensive walls, one could never get that far.

“Hm? We can go through?”

“I guess that Kouryu never got around to updating the security?”

The gate let the angels through. They were still permitted through the security system.

“I figured we could blow ourselves up to get through, but this makes things easier!”

Of course, reaching the core came with certain risks. That was why they had come as a group. Even if the majority of them became casualties, they figured at least one could get to their target.

“That’s a good sign. Let’s go while we can!”

They passed through numerous gates. It didn’t seem like the security measures had been changed at all. The gates weren’t recognizing the angels as foreign entities.

Passing through countless gates, they nearly made it to the core. There was one last gate blocking their progress. Beyond it shone a brilliant light. It was a collection of energy, a condensation of information and power that could be called the world itself.

“Ahh, I guess we can’t get any farther than this with our access rights.”

“Isn’t it strange we got this far?”

“Hey, has anyone ever made it this far in before?”

“No.”

“Not me.”

“Nope!”

“Me neither!”

“So this is the first time any of us have been here.”

“Okay, then, let’s do rock paper scissors! Whoever wins has to blow up the gate!”

“There’s no way I could have left the security the way it was, right?”

The angels turned as one to face the new voice. A boy was floating in front of the last gate. It was the new god of this world, Kouryu.

“Ahh! What are you doing here?!”

“This, obviously.”

Kouryu flicked a hand. The shock wave that small motion unleashed

wiped out half of the angels.

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The survivors immediately attempted to flee, but the gate that had let them enter blocked their escape.

"Gah! It was a trap!"

"I don't know if I'd call it a trap. You came in so boldly, I assumed you had a plan and that I needed to be on guard. I don't really want to believe it, but you have no idea what you're doing here, do you?"

"For Lady Malnarilna!" One of the angels exploded. The gate behind them was partially destroyed, creating an opening for the others to escape through. The remaining angels fled through the opening, only to be blocked by the next gate.

"If you have to blow yourselves up to get out, I guess you'll all die without me having to do anything. But repairing all the gates would be kind of a pain."

Those were the last words the angels heard.

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"I never thought they'd be so dull."

Kouryu had known the angels were wandering about. He'd gotten rid of the ones he'd found, but they had scattered across the world. Then for some reason they had gathered into a group and headed to the core of the world. He'd decided to let them infiltrate deep inside and catch them all at once.

"Now then, it seems like you were planning on doing something. I feel bad for Yogiri, but I'll have to leave things as they are."

The angels had delivered oracles to their believers across the world that Yogiri Takatou was an enemy of God. There was nothing he could do about that now. Him being the god of this world now didn't mean he could take all of Malnarilna's followers. He would have to do the dirty work of creating his own following from the ground up. He couldn't manipulate Malnarilna's followers right now.

"Oh, looks like something is happening in the core. The Omega Blade has been restored?"

The Omega Blade could access the core directly, like the key to a back door. Even someone without the authority of a god could manipulate the world freely with it.

"It would have been easier if it was left to rest...but I guess I'll wait and

see what they do with it."

The Omega Blade was immensely powerful, but that incredible power was what made Kouryu decide not to intervene. The greater one's power became, the more they would grow arrogant and the greater their chances of crossing Yogiri Takatou.

At some point, the strong in this world would wipe themselves out. All Kouryu had to do was wait it out.

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Chapter 11 — They Are Made to Fight So Quickly That You Cannot Tell What Is Happening, Which Makes You Think the Animators Are Trying to Cut Corners!

The split pieces of Luu fell from the tree. Tomochika watched in shock. She hadn't even been able to react.

"Oh..."

As Luu's body hit the ground, Tomochika finally pulled herself together.

"Even though she was cut in half, there's no blood, huh?" Yogiri remarked, looking at her body on the ground.

Though the suddenness had taken her by surprise, Tomochika realized something was wrong. Luu had been cut in half. Normally, blood and organs would spill out, but nothing like that happened. Instead, the fallen pieces of her body began to squirm. Then they lifted up and began to seal the wound, trying to hold her together.

"You seem awfully calm for having just seen your beloved daughter cut in two before your eyes!" Hanakawa commented.

"She's not my daughter. She's just some weird person we picked up along the way."

"As expected of Sir Takatou! Despite her adorable appearance, you are able to write her off as 'some weird person' without issue! Though I am not sure whether to be afraid or impressed!"

"So now what?" Carol asked. "It looks like that thing was only after her." It was hardly likely that it was just attacking randomly. It had clearly been after Luu in particular.

"Do you know anything about it, Carol?"

"Nope. I have no clue what that thing was. But Luu was a goddess, right? That's probably why it was targeting her, don't you think?"

"I have seen this creature before! While I was traveling with Miss Aoi, it

attacked us!"

"Oh? I'm impressed you're still alive. Did you fight it off?"

"No. I simply begged on my hands and knees and it fled! It killed a golden dragon at the time. If it also killed a goddess at the tower as you said, it seems likely it is targeting the divine."

"A dragon? You mean like a golden thunder dragon?!" Tomochika exclaimed.

"Ahh, yes, that is the impression it gave. Have you seen it before?"

Tomochika recalled the massive golden dragon wrapped in lightning that they had encountered in the canyon. It had invited them to take part in the Swordmaster's trial in the tower and had promised to guide them out of the canyon if they met the Swordmaster. However, Tomochika and Yogiri had ended up getting a map from someone else on their way out and had never met the dragon again. Considering all that had happened at the tower, including the Swordmaster's death, they hadn't exactly been excited about meeting the dragon again, but they'd had no idea it had been killed.

"I guess we met it once...but it had taken the form of a young girl at the time, so it's kind of a complex feeling..."

"What?! Even in such a situation, you were collecting members for your harem?! Just what sort of fate have you been cursed with, Sir Takatou?!"

"I guess we did come across a lot of girls..." Thinking back, a large number of the people they had ended up interacting with had been women.

"But still, it appears somehow different from when I last saw it..." Hanakawa murmured, studying the creature. "Ah! It appears to be missing its right arm!"

The monster was a humanoid made of black metal, with blades all over its body. Tomochika only had a vague impression of it, but now that Hanakawa had mentioned it, it did seem to be missing an arm, as if it had been ripped off around the shoulder.

"So it killed a dragon, a goddess, and Luu, who was a collection of transformed Philosopher's Stones. I guess it's not interested in ordinary humans like us?" Putting aside whether Yogiri was actually just an ordinary human or not, that was at least how he looked.

"But if it's after the Philosopher's Stones, it's going to keep chasing us, isn't it?" Tomochika started to worry. If they were collecting Philosopher's Stones, this thing would likely keep harassing them. If that were the case, it

might have been best to deal with it right away.

"But Takatou only uses his power in self-defense, right?" Carol asked. "And he doesn't seem like the type to take revenge, so he probably won't kill something just because it'll be an issue in the future."

"In truth, I do not want to ask him to use his power except in cases of self-defense. If Takatou begins using vague criteria to decide when to use his power, all our plans will have been for nothing." Ryouko seemed extremely against the idea of attacking it.

"Umm. Without Luu's telekinesis, we probably have no choice but to find Euphemia, right?" Risley piped up, surprisingly selfishly.

"Why are you all being so cruel?!" Hanakawa complained. "Will you not help Luu?! She is clearly still alive! If you do not intervene, that creature will finish her off!" Despite being cut in half, Luu was still moving. The pieces of her body were struggling to reunite themselves.

"Okay, then go ahead, Hanakawa."

"Ugh...that is not a line appropriate for a hero! But more importantly, will it not be an issue for your plans if Luu, your method of getting home, is killed?!"

"Hmm...what is most strange is that the creature has yet to finish her off," Mokomoko observed with a frown.

It was certainly strange. Luu was writhing on the ground. The monster could have easily sliced her into a thousand pieces where she lay, but while they discussed the situation up in the trees, the monster sat there motionless. It wasn't looking at Luu; it was facing in some other direction. Something had caught its attention.

Tomochika tried to figure out what it was looking at. A woman with long hair and gaudy clothes was walking towards them.

"I finally caught up to you. You've been on the loose for too long!" The woman was clearly furious, but the monster didn't respond. It just stared at her. "Ma! Are you still alive?! She is, isn't she?! Just barely! I finally found her, and she's almost dead!" The woman continued her angry advance.

Maybe Tomochika couldn't tell exactly what was going on from up in the tree, but her advance seemed careless.

"Take this! This is for cutting my puppy in two!" The woman swung an exaggerated punch. She didn't seem the least bit concerned that she was about to punch something covered in blades. Her fist struck the creature's

head, blowing it off its shoulders. At the same time, the monster's remaining hand grazed her cheek. It had aimed for her head, but she had avoided it just by moving her head to the side.

"And this is for cutting Ma in two! Stop cutting everything you see in half! It's too one-note!" The woman delivered a kick to the monster's stomach, sending it flying. But in the next moment, it was behind her again. Apparently serious now that it had taken damage, the monster moved with terrifying speed.

The woman spun around and delivered a kick behind her, but that was as much as Tomochika could see. The two below continued to exchange blows at a speed her eyes couldn't track. Clumps of earth were kicked up into the air, and trees were shredded, crushed, and knocked over. Before they knew it, a fight that surpassed human understanding had begun.

"What is going on here?! Now there's suddenly a fight?!" Tomochika exclaimed.

"Ah, it is one of those situations," Hanakawa said. "Like in anime, where they are made to fight so quickly that you cannot tell what is happening, which makes you think the animators are trying to cut corners! All you can see are shock waves!"

"So what are we supposed to do?" Yogiri asked, at a loss.

"For now, let's just wait and see who wins."

"I concur! There is nothing we can do in this...situation?" As Hanakawa spoke, the branch on which he was sitting snapped. One of their attacks had struck the tree they were hiding in.

"Gaaaaaah!" With a scream, Hanakawa dropped to the ground.

"Maybe we should get down from here and try running away?" Carol suggested.

"Good idea. Everyone chasing us already left."

"But how do we get down?" Yogiri asked. "I think we're a bit too high for me to get down by myself."

It didn't seem like Luu would be able to help them. Tomochika could climb down easily enough, but it would be a challenge for Yogiri.

"I would appreciate it if you could show some concern for my well-being instead of discussing things so calmly!" Hanakawa shouted from the forest floor.

"You can heal yourself, can't you?"

“I can, but that is not the point!”

“I can carry Takatou down,” Tomochika offered.

“All right, let’s do that,” Yogiri agreed.

Putting one arm under Yogiri’s legs and another around his waist, Tomochika stood on her branch. Yogiri then put an arm around Tomochika’s neck so that she was carrying him like a princess.

“Wow, this feels really stable,” he said, impressed.

“Indeed,” Mokomoko answered proudly. “Though it looks simple enough, if one is inexperienced, it can be extremely difficult.”

“Am I really being praised for how well I can carry a person?”

Tomochika had picked him up like that since it had seemed easiest for him that way, but they couldn’t waste any more time. With Yogiri in her arms, she leaped down from the tree, absorbing the shock of the impact with her knees. They managed to get down without any injuries.

Ryouko and Carol jumped down after her. For them, the height wasn’t an obstacle.

“Now, what shall we do? Having descended is all well and good, but if we are not careful, we might get caught up in their combat,” Hanakawa moaned.

“Whoever tries to attack us will just die. Even if they don’t intentionally aim for us, if they’re so distracted they don’t pay attention to their surroundings, it’s their own fault if I have to respond.”

“I see. Sticking to you is definitely the correct choice, Sir Takatou!”

“I’d really appreciate it if you didn’t, but I guess I don’t have much of a choice...” Yogiri only automatically protected himself and Tomochika, and it didn’t look like he was interested in adding anyone else to the mix.

“Ah, before we move, I would like to attempt something. If Luu is still alive, perhaps my healing magic will be effective on her?” Hanakawa stepped closer to the fallen pieces of Luu. “Heal!” He reached out to touch her body. That was all he needed to do to use his power. The split halves of her body glowed briefly before reconnecting.

“I thought I was gonna die!” Luu immediately sat up.

“You seem surprisingly okay.”

“I’m not okay at all! Ack, Hanakawa saw me naked! Gross!” Of course, her clothes had also been sliced in two.

“Why would I be interested in the form of a three-year-old child? And even after I went through the trouble of healing you...”

“Put this on for now,” Tomochika said, throwing her a shirt from their belongings.

“So, Luu, do you have any idea what’s going on?” Yogiri asked.

“No! I have no clue!”

“Okay then, let’s get out of the forest. We’ll follow the plan we came up with earlier. We’ll go look for Euphemia, while Carol’s group goes to try and get a boat for us. Hanakawa, you can do whatever you like.”

“Hold it! Where are you trying to take Ma?!”

The moment they tried to leave, the woman fighting the monster called out to them. Looking around, they realized the high-speed battle had already come to an end. The gaudily dressed woman and the bladed monster had stopped moving and were glaring at each other.

“You mean this girl?” Yogiri pointed at Luu.

“By ‘Ma’ she means her mother, right? And why is she talking like that?!”

“That must be a result of your translation device attempting to communicate the nuances of her speech,” Mokomoko explained. Since they hadn’t received the Gift, Yogiri and Tomochika couldn’t understand this world’s language. In order to speak with the people there, they were using magical translators given to them by the concierge Celestina, whom they had met in Quenza.

“That’s right! So don’t try to kidnap her!”

“Do you know her?” Yogiri asked Luu.

“Me? No.” Luu shook her head, seeming as confused as the rest of them.

“She says she doesn’t know you.”

“No, no, no! You can’t say that! You’ve been away from home so long... Are you still trying to avoid coming back?!”

Though Luu didn’t know her, the other woman was acting awfully familiar with her. Luu had said that her memories as a goddess were still vague, so it was likely the stranger knew more than Luu did.

“She doesn’t really know much about herself, so if you could explain things for us, that would help a lot. But this place is kind of dangerous, so we’re going to leave.”

“And I’m saying wait! I’ll mop this guy up in a sec!”

“Huh? After all the fighting you’ve already done, you still think you can beat him that quickly?!” Tomochika replied reflexively.

“You know...you’re awfully harsh for having such a cute face! This guy’s stronger than the last time I saw him! Anyway, just wait a sec! I’m already done getting ready to beat him!”

Eyes appeared. On the ground, on the trees, on the rocks, on the fallen leaves, on the puddles of water. Countless eyes appeared around them, all staring at the monster. They seemed to be connected to the woman somehow, a manifestation of her iron will to keep the creature from escaping.

“Now you can’t go anywhere! Maybe you got out last time, but this time there’s no way!” The woman swung her right arm around in a circle. From below, she swung her arm up behind her, then brought it down hard. Repeating the motion twice, she started approaching the monster.

While there might have been a lot of force behind it, she was telegraphing the attack far too much. Anyone with any sort of experience in combat would have been able to avoid it. But the monster’s only reply was to shudder in place.

What kind of attack was that? Tomochika had no idea what was happening, but there must have been some meaning behind the appearance of all those eyes. Maybe they were binding the monster in place.

“Die!” Her spinning arm struck the monster head on. Hit from directly above, the bladed creature’s body exploded into countless pieces, scattering in all directions.

“Ah!” Apparently caught off guard by the result of her actions, the woman yelped.

The monster was gone, and the forest was quiet once more.

“Is it over?”

“Uhh, it definitely looks like I won. You saw how it exploded, right? Like it was admitting defeat?”

“The way you say that makes it hard to believe!”

“I couldn’t finish it off, but it feels like I did quite a bit of damage, and it’s in tons of pieces now, so I think I won!”

“So it ran away...”

“I’m serious, though; it’s over!”

“Well, at least it’s safe now, right? So tell us what’s going on.” Yogiri replied, feeling the conversation wasn’t going anywhere.

“I have no reason to answer questions from a human, but it looks like you’ve been taking care of Ma, so I’ll hear you out.”

“Is Luu your mother?”

“That’s right, I’m her kid.”

“Uh...it really looks like the exact opposite, doesn’t it?”

“I have no idea why she looks like that!” the woman said.

Tomochika was starting to doubt whether they’d get any useful information out of this person.

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Chapter 12 — That Really Is Cheating. It's like Playing a Video Game with an Invincibility Code On

Within a cave in the Elven Forest, having heard Navi's explanation of the Omega Blade, Shigeto decided on a course of action. He would destroy the Sages who thought they were so far above everyone else.

"First of all, let's start with the Sage that brought us here."

Sion had summoned them and forced them into an almost impossible task. If he wanted revenge, she would be the logical place to start.

"The sword can tell where she is, right?"

"Yes," Navi replied. "Its omnipotence makes it more or less omniscient as well, allowing access to any information about this world." She was a creation of the Omega Blade and had appeared to explain everything to him.

"'More or less'?"

"It knows virtually everything about this world, but there are some exceptions. For example, it cannot hold all of that information simultaneously. It *can* know anything but only about the target of its focus. If you were capable of thinking of multiple things at the same time, I suppose it would be possible to do that, though."

"Well, I'm no Prince Shotoku. I can only think of one thing at a time. But can't I use it to change myself so that I could think of multiple things at once?"

"Your own thoughts and intelligence are beyond the scope of the Omega Blade's powers. In short, it cannot make you any smarter."

"You said 'my own.' Does that mean I can make other people smarter?"

"Yes, though I am not sure what purpose that would serve. You could also give the Omega Blade to someone else who could then use it to improve your cognitive faculties, but I can't recommend it."

"Why? If I use it to make them perfectly obedient to me beforehand, it

should be safe, don't you think?"

"Once one acquires the Omega Blade, they will be freed from all mental manipulation. So as I said, you absolutely must not let anyone else come into contact with it."

"You said there were a few exceptions. What are the others?"

"Oh, yes. It cannot know the thoughts and feelings of those who came from outside the world. In addition, there are those within this world with the ability to create worlds of their own. It cannot look into those other worlds."

"There seem to be an awful lot of restrictions on something that's 'omnipotent.'"

"Though it may sound strange, that is because perfect omnipotence is impossible. Rather than operating from a viewpoint of being 'almost omnipotent,' I believe it is more effective to look at what you can do from the perspective of the restrictions you face."

"Well, whatever. For now, let's deal with Sion. Omega Blade, tell me where she is."

The Omega Blade only acted when called on by name. Shigeto had set it up to only act on explicit orders.

"Sion does not exist within this world," Navi replied.

"Why are you answering?!"

"I am like a Terminal of the Omega Blade. If you want an answer in words, going through me is the quickest way, don't you think?"

"I guess so...but what do you mean she doesn't exist?"

"There are a few possible reasons. She could already be dead, she could have left the world, or she could have entered a smaller world contained within this one."

"Are there records up to the time she disappeared?"

"I imagine there are, but you will have to ask the Omega Blade directly for them."

It seemed unreasonably inflexible, but it was Shigeto who had set up the sword to work that way.

"Okay then, let's try again. Omega Blade, treat any questions to Navi as questions to you. Let her answer any questions she receives." With Navi right in front of him, having to ask the Omega Blade over and over seemed needlessly confusing, so he changed the settings a little.

"Understood."

“Navi, please review the records of what Sion was doing up until she left this world, and guess where she might have gone.” Even if they knew her final movements, figuring out where she’d gone might have been difficult, so he included making that judgment in his instructions.

“Immediately before disappearing, Sion teleported. Her destination was a pocket dimension underneath Valeria, the capital of the Kingdom of Manii. Presently, it is referred to as the Underworld. The Underworld is a manufactured world, so as I explained earlier, the Omega Blade is unable to observe what happens in there.”

“She went in and never came back?”

“That is correct. There are no records of her leaving. Afterwards, flesh thought to be part of a Dark God burst out of the Underworld, destroying Valeria entirely. Though it is just conjecture, it seems highly likely she was caught up in the event and killed. Confirming that will require investigating the Underworld ourselves, though.”

“I don’t think we need to go that far. There’s no point in obsessing over her. Omega Blade, tell me which Sages you can provide the locations of.”

“Sage Raiza, Sage Alice, Sage Gorouzaburou, Sage Akemi. The locations of the above four are known.”

“That’s all?”

“Those are the results returned by your specific inquiry, yes.”

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“Actually, is the word ‘Sage’ good enough on its own? Is there a definition?”

“Yes. It refers to those who possess the class of ‘Sage’ within the Battlesong system.”

“My abilities as a Master Oracle were taken from me, so what happened to me as far as Battlesong is concerned?”

“Battlesong is a system of rules that were added to this world after its creation. The Omega Blade is the divine sword that was used to first create this world, so it has control over everything within the world itself, including the Battlesong system. In short, Battlesong is meaningless to you as you are now, and you have been entirely released from it.”

“I figured I could beat them since I could do anything, but I won’t have issues fighting the Sages, right?”

“Correct. Though the Omega Blade has a number of limitations, you can consider yourself invincible when it comes to combat in this world.”

“You said earlier that Sion teleported. Can I do that?”

“Yes, as long as you wish to teleport somewhere within this world. You will not be able to enter other dimensions without permission, however.”

“Didn’t you say Sion teleported into one?”

“The Underworld permits entry to everyone, so teleporting there is possible. The only restriction is the inability to see within it from the outside.”

“Sounds like there are a lot of technicalities to this. Is teleporting dangerous? I can’t imagine how it would work.”

“Do not worry. If you are interested in teleporting, the sword will automatically make considerations for your safety. However, it will occur instantaneously, so the first time may take you by surprise.”

“I see. In that case, give me a countdown so I can get ready.”

“Understood.”

“Omega Blade, teleport me to the Sage Raiza.” There was no particular reason he had picked Raiza. It was just the first name on the list Navi had given him.

“Would you mind teleporting ten or so meters away, rather than directly beside him?” Navi asked.

“You’re being awfully picky.”

“It would be an issue for you if the sword interpreted vague instructions in

its own way, wouldn't it?"

"Okay, then hold on a second. Are there other people around Raiza?"

"It seems there are."

"And the Omega Blade can make us invisible, right?"

"Of course."

"Okay then, make us invisible and teleport us. Please give me a countdown."

"Very well. Five, four, three, two, one, teleporting."

In an instant, the world around him transformed. As Navi had warned, if this had happened out of nowhere, it would have been a considerable shock.

It was dark. He was in a stone building, lit dimly by a number of lamps. In front of him was a square room made of iron bars, within which someone was lying face down. A number of armed men who looked like guards stood around the square room, keeping an eye on the contents of the cage. The person inside was likely Raiza.

"What is going on here? Navi, tell me." Sages were supposed to be the ruling class of this world. He had no idea why one would be locked up in this dark, gloomy place.

"He was overthrown and imprisoned. He lost most of his power, but approaching him remains dangerous, so a cage and stone structure were built around him."

This had once been an open square. The people had been unable to move Raiza from where he lay, so they'd simply imprisoned him on the spot.

"He was overthrown? He lost to someone?"

"Correct. He was defeated by your classmate, Yogiri Takatou, who paralyzed his four limbs and removed his ability to speak."

"What? Why is Takatou's name coming up all of a sudden?" Shigeto knew next to nothing about Yogiri. Yogiri didn't stand out in class and was the opposite of assertive, so Shigeto had never interacted with him. On top of that, he hadn't received the Gift, so he had been abandoned on the bus by the group at the start.

"It appears he possessed some sort of power before coming to this world. I do not know the details, but those who have encountered him perceive it as the ability to kill anyone he wishes instantly."

"What's that supposed to mean? Whatever. It doesn't matter. I guess this guy won't work as a good test subject for me, then." Shigeto couldn't care

less about where Yogiri was or what he was doing.

"I suppose not. It does not matter much who the opponent is, but one who cannot move won't prove anything."

"But I did decide to kill the Sages. I guess I should kill him...but how?" He could do anything, but that made deciding how to kill Raiza something of a challenge.

"If you only wish to kill him, all you must do is instruct the Omega Blade to do so."

"Omega Blade. Teleport me right beside him. I don't need a countdown." The moment he finished speaking, the scenery around him changed again. He had appeared inside the metal cage, right beside Raiza.

Shigeto kicked the fallen Sage, flipping him over onto his back. Raiza's body trembled. That was enough to send a shock wave outward, shaking the building around them. But that appeared to be the most he could do. The stone structure had been built to withstand those shock waves.

"That surprised me. He can do an awful lot for not being able to move." Shigeto was unharmed. He had set the Omega Blade to respond to danger to his person automatically, so it had neutralized the shock wave.

"What's going on?! Raiza is struggling again!"

"Has he still not given up?! Persistent bastard!"

"There's no way he's recovering, right?!"

"Just in case, call for reinforcements!"

The guards began to panic. They were always on the alert for those shock waves and were therefore a considerable distance from the metal cage. The distance was enough that the shock waves Raiza could unleash were unable to hurt them. It was dangerous to get close, but they would be safe if they maintained their distance. They must have intended to keep watch until he died.

"Omega Blade, kill Raiza," Shigeto commanded.

Instantly Raiza's struggling ceased, and he stopped moving altogether. Shigeto gave him another kick, but his enormous body offered no resistance. He was definitely dead. Shigeto had come this close because he wanted to see the result. He wanted to see if the Omega Blade worked on the Sages with his own two eyes.

"Dying on command doesn't seem very fair, does it?"

"Yes. Battles for one possessing the Omega Blade are all like this. You

can neutralize all attacks and kill your opponents with a thought. This is what it means to be unrivaled."

"It really is cheating. It's like playing a video game with an invincibility code on. Not much fun, is it?"

"Then will you give up on fighting the Sages?"

"No. Even if it's boring, completing a checklist gives its own sense of accomplishment. There's still meaning in seeing it through to the end. Next is the Sage Alice. Teleport me."

Killing the Sages may have been pointless, but that was the decision Shigeto had made right from the beginning when he had set off on an adventure when first coming to this world.

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Chapter 13 — We've Seen All Sorts of Gods and Dark Gods, So One or Two More Doesn't Change Much

Carol, Ryouko, and Risley headed back to the city to secure a method of transportation. Hanakawa, after agonizing over the issue for a while, decided staying with Yogiri was the safest option. As evidenced by Luu being sliced in two, staying by Yogiri's side was no guarantee of safety, but it did give him the highest chance of survival.

That left six of them within the forest: Tomochika, Yogiri, Mokomoko, Hanakawa, Luu, and the mysterious woman who had just appeared. They were all sitting in a circle.

"First of all, why are you calling Ma 'Luu' in the first place?" the woman who had claimed Luu to be her mother asked.

"She didn't know anything about herself, so we just gave her a name. If she has a real one, we can use that."

"Ma's name? Her name is—"

"Don't say it! I'm Luu! That's the name daddy gave me!"

"'Daddy'? This guy? What're ya talking about? You're gonna make this kid into my granddad."

"I guess it's kind of like imprinting? I was the first human she saw after gaining consciousness, I guess."

"If that's what Ma wants, then fine. I guess I need to introduce myself too. I'm Hiruko. I'm a god."

"I see..." Tomochika sighed. *Not another one.*

"What's with you?! You act like that with a god right in front of you?!"

"Well, we've seen all sorts of gods and Dark Gods, so one or two more doesn't change much."

"Just who d'you think you are?! Just 'cause you're taking care of Ma doesn't mean you can talk to me like that!"

“Can we keep going?” Yogiri interrupted.

“Huh?”

“With the introductions.” Despite Hiruko’s threatening attitude, Yogiri was unfazed.

“Ah. I guess we were in the middle of that.”

“I’m Yogiri Takatou. We were summoned to this world. I don’t know what’s going on here, so I don’t know anything about Luu either.”

“I’m Tomochika Dannoura. I’m in the same situation as Takatou.”

“I am Mokomoko Dannoura. In truth, I am Tomochika’s guardian spirit, but as you can see, I am currently controlling this puppet. As an aside, would the name ‘Hiruko’ perhaps be related to the Japanese mythology of our world?”

“Doubt it. I came from another world, but you guys don’t look like you’re from mine. I guess maybe some people could have noticed me and started worshiping me without me knowing, though.”

“So, who is Luu and why are you here? And who was that guy you fought earlier?”

“One at a time, jeez. Ma’s a super important god. She went out once and never came home, so I’ve been looking around for her and finally found her here. No idea what that thing I fought was, but it looks like it was going around fighting anyone who looked like a god. Judging by the way it acted, it seems like it was after Ma as well.”

“And she answered them all at once anyway...” Tomochika commented.

Hiruko had fought that bladed monster somewhere else, but it had suddenly run off. That was likely because it had noticed Luu’s presence.

“Then allow me to introduce myself...”

“He’s Hanakawa,” Yogiri interrupted, giving as short an introduction as possible.

“Is that all the introduction I deserve?!”

“You were going to give a super-long introduction, right?” Tomochika said. “Filled with all sorts of creepy and gross laughs.”

“Your prejudice wounds me, Tomochika! No true otaku would speak in such a strange manner!”

“I feel like the way you speak is strange enough...”

“That is different! That is simply a way for someone as featureless as myself to distinguish himself!”

“You seem to have enough of an impact already. I don’t think you need more distinguishing.”

“Your words are so harsh, Tomochika. It is no wonder people say you would be so beautiful if knocked unconscious.”

“So *you’re* the one who started that?!” Though she hadn’t known about it until she’d gotten to this world, among her classmates she was famous for being “gravure-class in looks alone,” or “phenomenally beautiful if she just stopped talking,” or “above average even overseas if you knocked her out.”

“So, now that Hiruko is here, do we need to change our plans?” Yogiri asked.

Tomochika and Yogiri’s goal was to get back to their own world. They needed Philosopher’s Stones for that, so they were searching for Sages, but getting off the island was proving difficult. If they could use the teleportation device Lain had set up, they could easily make it to another continent where a Sage lived, so they were searching for Euphemia in hopes she could help them use it. She was currently missing, so they were heading to the area around the capital to look for her. But given their current situation, Yogiri wondered if they needed to rethink their plan.

“Do you have any idea how we could get home, Hiruko?”

“Go ask the guy who summoned ya.”

“We did. She told us she didn’t set it up so we could go back.”

“I guess with the way this world is positioned, summoning people is easy but sending them back is pretty tough,” Hiruko said.

“Are you still connected to your home world?” Yogiri asked. Those who came to this world on their own often seemed to have a connection to their home that allowed them to travel back.

“’Course. I can’t just go traveling with no way back.”

“So how were you planning on taking Luu with you?”

“Oh...” Apparently, she hadn’t thought that far ahead. “Uhh...I was gonna figure that out once I found her. I had no idea what state Ma would be in, you see.”

“Well, she’s like this.”

“Err...this is just a bit of you, right, Ma? Where’s the rest of ya?”

“I don’t know.” Luu casually answered.

Luu basically knew nothing at this point, so Yogiri gave a rough explanation of her current situation.

“So those Sages each got a piece of Ma? And when you killed ’em, Ma got more pieces of herself back. I guess we’ll figure it out when she’s totally back to normal, then.”

“Is Luu that impressive?”

“She’s totally amazing! She’s the greatest god and rules over the whole sea! She ain’t someone who the likes of you could ever talk to!”

“If she’s so strong, how did she end up like this?” Yogiri looked at Luu. She looked like an ordinary three-year-old, so it was hard to imagine she was some kind of super being.

“How should I know? I’m the one who wants to ask that!”

“So in short, Hiruko’s story doesn’t change anything...”

“Hmm. But you’re a powerful god too, right?” Yogiri asked Hiruko.

“’Course I am! You won’t see many like me around.”

“In that case, why don’t we leave Luu with her, and get her to collect all the Philosopher’s Stones?” he suggested to Tomochika. “And once Luu is back to normal, she can send us home.”

“Wait, then what would we do in the meantime?!” Tomochika asked.

“It’s better if we don’t need to do anything, right? We’ll be attacked by Malnarilna’s followers anywhere we go.”

“I guess so. I suppose it would be best if we just kicked back...”

“Are you two sure about leaving such an important matter to a stranger?” asked Mokomoko.

“I also would like to ask you two to act more like protagonists. How can you leave such crucial matters in the hands of another?!” Hanakawa demanded.

Yogiri supposed there was no proof Hiruko could get Luu back to normal, and even if she did, there was no guarantee Luu would help them once that happened. They didn’t even know if getting Luu back to her original form was the right thing to do.

“I’m definitely getting Ma back to normal. But those Philosopher’s Stones or whatever? I have no idea where they are.”

“If you’re a god, can’t you figure that out?”

“If this was my own world, then sure. But I can’t use my power freely in someone else’s world.”

“Which means?”

“It means, you know, if you’re gonna get Ma back together anyway, that

makes things easier for me, yeah?"

"What is going on here?! For an event as important as the reunification of the scattered fragments of a god, all related persons seem to be treating it as nothing more than an irritating chore!"

"Then why don't we work together? Once Luu is back to normal, we want her to send us home. If you help us, getting the Philosopher's Stones should be easy enough, right?"

"Doesn't sound bad to me. I don't know anything about this place. You guys should know a bit more. And besides, Ma seems to like you, so I can't really say no."

"But what can Hiruko do to help us?"

"Good question. For now, we need to get to the continent in the east. Can you get us there?"

"Piece of cake."

"I suppose a god like you would be capable of instant teleportation? That Jet Black Witch woman I met earlier teleported around like it was nothing." Hanakawa must have been talking about one of the assassins sent to kill Yogiri. She had come at the request of a god, so she had been allowed to teleport around.

"Nah, I can't teleport. I forced my way into this world, so I don't have the right permissions. If I was on my own, then maybe. But either way, I can float us there no problem."

"So how do Lain's teleportation devices work?"

"No idea what they are, but if they were made by someone in this world, they probably use the world's own system to teleport," Hiruko guessed.

"Hmm. If Hiruko can take us to the mainland, we'll have no need to find Euphemia, will we?" Mokomoko said.

She was right. If they weren't going to use the teleportation devices, they didn't need Euphemia.

"But we did promise Risley we'd look for her, so we can't just change our mind because we found another way."

"Ohhh...I thought you would instantly choose to abandon them again once you found a way to your destination, Sir Takatou!"

"What sort of person do you think I am, Hanakawa?"

"An instant death cheating bastard?"

"You're really something else..." Tomochika murmured.

“No, he is just convinced that power will never be turned against him,” Mokomoko added.

“Euphemia, is it? No idea who that is, but we can’t go ’til we find her, yeah? Let’s get moving, then.” As Hiruko finished speaking, the six of them floated up into the air. Her ability seemed much stronger than Luu’s. They felt totally stable despite being in the air.

“Okay then, take us to the capital.”

“You’re pretty blunt for dealing with a god here! Normally you’d be shuddering in fear at the thought of asking me for something, you know?!”

The six of them immediately lifted up above the trees and started heading in the direction Yogiri indicated.

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Chapter 14 — Your Name Is Alice, So I Was Imagining a Girl in a Blue Dress with a White Apron

At Shigeto's instruction, after a short countdown, the scenery around him changed again.

"Where are we?"

He had ordered the Omega Blade to teleport him to the Sage Alice, but there was no sign of her. He was in a long, dark hallway. Lamps hanging from the low ceiling cast a dim light around him. The walls were lined with countless doors. It was too dark to see far, giving the impression that the hallway continued forever, with an infinite number of doors.

"This is where Alice is," Navi explained.

"I know that, but can't you teleport me beside her?" Technically, he hadn't ordered the sword to do that, but he couldn't help but be unsatisfied with the result.

"This is a pocket dimension that rejects teleportation. You have permission to come this far, but you can't teleport any farther."

"So what, am I supposed to check all of these doors one by one?"

"If that is too much trouble, you could destroy the dimension altogether. It is little more than a transient bubble on the surface of the world, after all. Your power is overwhelmingly greater, so the Sages have no choice but to scurry around in the dark, hiding."

"If I go inside, will I still be able to use the Omega Blade?"

"Yes. This dimension is still built on the framework of the greater world. It will only provide some moderate advantages to the owner."

"I guess I'll go test it out, then." Shigeto didn't have much of an objective. His desire to defeat the Sages was just an extension of his actions from before getting the Omega Blade. It may have been safer to test the weapon out more carefully, but he had grown apathetic. He had begun to stop caring whether

he lived or died.

Opening a random door, Shigeto stepped inside. It was bright, so much so that it felt like he was outside, and when he looked up, he in fact saw the sun hanging in a blue sky. Turning around, he saw the door through which he entered was nowhere to be seen, replaced by an expansive meadow.

"We're not actually outside, are we?"

"Correct. We are still within the space created by the Sage Alice. This is her ability. Each Sage has their own special skills that are unique to them."

There was a gate in front of them. The gate had a large arch and walls on either side of it. Though he had walked through a door to get here, there was another entrance in front of him. The gate was ornately decorated. Spotless walls as white as chalk stretched out seemingly forever.

"Can the Omega Blade tell where she is? Actually, never mind. I'll just go in and find out for myself."

The walls and gate didn't seem like they were trying to keep anyone out, so it didn't seem like Alice was hiding.

Shigeto passed through the gate. The world inside was full of vivid colors. Trees with colors that seemed unnatural grew inside along with enormous colorful mushrooms. A wide path made of stone stretched straight ahead, leading to a beautiful white castle in the distance. The path was lined by small houses that looked like they'd been pulled right out of a fairy tale, and cheerful music filled the air. Anthropomorphized animals danced along to it on the path.

"It looks like a theme park in here." Rather than a city, it gave the impression of an amusement park.

"This was all created through the Sage Alice's Another Kingdom skill."

"Looks like she's probably in that castle."

"Shall I check for you?"

"No, it's fine. I'm not in a hurry or anything."

Shigeto began walking down the path. As he walked, he realized he could hear more than just the pleasant music. There were screams mixed in with it. It seemed he wasn't the only one here.

Looking around, he found the other humans right away. Dangling from the trees, being trampled on by the dancing animals, and being burned alive in the houses.

"Looks like she's as bad as the rest of the Sages," Shigeto commented.

Nearby was a cute bear walking along on two feet, but its face was drenched in blood. It looked like it was carrying balloons, but they were in fact freshly severed human heads. It was marching around, proudly displaying long, thin branches with human heads impaled on the ends of them.

"Dammit! What is this place?! What is going on here?!"

A man came running by, a panda skipping along happily behind him, wielding something like a machete. The man noticed Shigeto walking casually down the path and changed directions, running towards him. "Help! Please, help—"

But before he could make it to Shigeto, the panda lunged forward, burying his machete in the man's skull. As the man fell to the ground, the panda jumped on top of him and continued hacking away.

Shigeto passed by, paying no mind to the tragedy happening around him. "It seems if you're not afraid, there's no issue passing through."

"We're just at the entrance, so I am sure things will get more serious farther in."

As they kept walking, they came to an arched bridge. Canals divided the place into different areas, with bridges used to connect them.

Upon crossing the bridge, the atmosphere changed dramatically. The density of trees increased to the point where it was hard to see anything. He had walked into a forest. The thick canopy blocked most of the light, creating a dark, ominous atmosphere. But the path continued on to the castle, so he continued.

He could still hear screams. He no longer saw cute, stuffed animal-like creatures, but actual wild beasts. Huge wolves, deer, and bears were eating people. The animals here were actively hunting humans down. As they noticed Shigeto's presence, they bared their fangs and approached.

"Omega Blade, reflect their attacks."

The weapon was set to defend him automatically, but he gave it clear instructions anyway.

A wolf lunged at him but slammed into an invisible wall. It then began to twist and warp, breaking bones all over its body. It seemed to have survived the ordeal, but Shigeto didn't care any more than that. Leaving the deformed wolf behind, he continued onward.

Other beasts attacked him one after another, but they all met the same

fate. Long before their fangs or claws could reach him, they struck an invisible wall and received fatal injuries in turn.

"This is pretty easy."

"Yes, the Omega Blade can render any attack powerless."

"It almost makes me feel a little guilty."

"Soon you will grow accustomed to it, and it will be second nature to you."

"Despite being a sword, there's really no need to swing it around in battle, is there?"

"Correct. Just possessing it is enough to automatically win any fight. As such, winning or losing becomes irrelevant. What is needed is the wielder's ingenuity in how to use that nigh-omnipotent power to reach their goals."

"Right now, I have no idea what I want to do. I figured I'd think about it after killing the Sages."

"In truth, there is no need for you to personally go and hunt down each Sage one by one."

"I don't really want to skip that step, though. It feels better for me to do it myself."

There were plenty of ways for him to kill the Sages indirectly with the Omega Blade. For example, he could use it to create subordinates to go hunt them down. However, Shigeto intended to watch each and every Sage die himself. He felt like he wouldn't really feel accomplished unless he did that.

Passing through the forest, he came upon another bridge. Crossing over it, he ended up in a place that looked like a graveyard. Stone crosses were planted in the rough, churned earth. A cross wasn't a religious symbol in this world, so as a place made by Alice, that must have meant Alice came from another world.

Apparently, the idea of this area was to have the dead come and greet visitors. Skeletons and thoroughly rotting zombies milled about. But however strong they might have been, nothing they did worked against Shigeto. As they approached, they were thrown away. The broken bodies of the undead were then forced back together, rising to attack again, but none of them ever got any closer. The invisible barrier was keeping them all at bay.

"How strong are these things?"

"They appear reasonably powerful. They are the remains of those who came here to slay the Sage Alice. There are even Heroes among them. In

terms you would understand, they appear about ten times as strong as Ragna was."

"Heroes, huh? I used to think they were so strong..." At this point, he couldn't consider that level of power as being anything but hopelessly insufficient.

Passing through the graveyard, he came upon a large castle. That would be the last obstacle for him. Once he approached the bridge, the undead stopped chasing him. Apparently they could only act within the graveyard. The bridge connected to a large castle gate.

"Omega Blade, open the gate." He didn't know whether the gate was actually locked, but the idea of pushing the doors open himself seemed like too much of a pain.

The gate opened, revealing a luxurious interior. The place shone, gold and white. The amusement park earlier and this castle must have been built from Alice's imagination. So this must have been what she imagined when she thought of a luxurious castle.

Shigeto stepped into the entrance hall. Climbing the large staircase in front of him, he instructed the Omega Blade to open the large set of doors blocking his path. They opened up into what seemed to be a throne room. It was adorned with just as much gold as the rest of the castle. Directly in front of the door was a platform holding a throne, upon which a young girl in a pink dress sat, looking down at Shigeto.

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She was the Sage Alice, making this the end of her tasteless amusement park.

"Oh? It's been a while since someone made it this far."

Shigeto stepped up to the throne, looking up at her. "Your name is Alice, so I was imagining a girl in a blue dress with a white apron."

"The girl from Alice in Wonderland wasn't a princess, was she?" Clearly, this Sage thought of herself as a princess. "So, what do you want? You're not here 'cause you want to kill a Sage, are you? People come here every once in a while to do that, but what did I do wrong? I guess there are some people who don't like me inviting random people in here and want me to stop too. But I think that's not too big a price to pay for my protection. If I wasn't here, a whole lot more people would be dying, you know?"

"Why are you Sages always doing these kinds of things? Summoning people and forcing them to become new Sages, creating countries and forcing people to play as adventurers..."

"Uhh, 'cause we're bored? We can't stand being Sages if we don't do stuff like this. In the end, we all end up messing with people for our entertainment. No matter what we try, we always end up going there. That's where the most fun is."

Many people might get furious after hearing something like that from a Sage. But Shigeto's only thought was *Ah, I see.* He couldn't help but feel she might be right about people who obtained power that set them apart from everyone else.

"Anyway," he said, "I came here to kill a Sage. Do you feel like fighting?"

"Sure, let's do it. But before I fight, I have to let my royal guard try!" As she spoke, a dark shadow spread across the floor, from which a person crawled out.

"Royal guard? I can take more than one at a time, if you like."

"Hmm. Then maybe I'll do four. Not that they're anything stupid like Four Heavenly Kings or something." Four knights had now appeared in front of her.

"Are these knights particularly impressive or something?"

"Not really. All they have is an attack with perfect accuracy that ignores defense and inflicts certain death, infinite magical energy, and immortality. I've never seen someone beat them, though."

“I see.”

“Okay, if you can beat them, I’ll fight you. Go!”

One of the knights lunged at Shigeto. Whatever it was trying to do, before it could accomplish anything, it was split in two.

“Huh?”

“Didn’t seem like perfect accuracy to me. I guess certain death beats out immortality as well.” It had likely tried to attack him with its sword. The Omega Blade had reflected that attack right back at it. The perfect accuracy, certain death attack had been enough to defeat the knight’s immortality.

The other knights were crushed, incinerated, and wrenched apart in turn. Their movements were faster than the eye could follow. Shigeto didn’t have any idea what they were trying to do, but he didn’t need to know. Any attack they launched at him was automatically sent right back at them.

“Okay, I beat four of them. Now it’s your turn.”

Alice’s face was twisted in shock. Shigeto couldn’t help but feel a kind of dark satisfaction. Seeing someone who was so sure of their own invincibility suddenly freeze as they felt powerless sent a shiver of delight through him.

“O-Oh, you’re pretty good! But this place was made with my power, Another Kingdom! It’s a world that belongs to me alone! As long as we’re in here, I’m invincible!”

The ground suddenly disappeared. A pitch black void opened up under them. She must have intended to throw him out of the pocket dimension. Shigeto wasn’t sure if this counted as an attack, so it probably wouldn’t get reflected. Instead, he mentally instructed the Omega Blade to suspend him in the air.

The ceiling collapsed, but the stone crumbled to dust and fell harmlessly into the void below. Furniture, pillars, and weapons followed, all rushing to slam into Shigeto, but they were held back by the invisible barrier around him. Gravestones, earth, trees, water, corpses, beasts, stuffed animals, every little thing that made up Alice’s world tried to crush him. But none of them could so much as scratch him.

Before he knew it, there was nothing left. Shigeto and Navi floated alone in an empty void.

“Did she run away?”

“Looks like it,” Navi replied.

“She talked awfully big just to run away in the end.”

“Shall we pursue her? I can tell you where she went.”

Shigeto thought for a moment. “No. We’ll leave her for later.”

Remembering her terrified face at the end, Shigeto was starting to realize how to best use this power to entertain himself.

Chapter 15 — He Has the Ability to Cut Anything with His Sword, but It Is a Bit Lacking Compared to the Other Sages

Alice's power wasn't all that complex. Within her world, everything went exactly as she desired. So as long as she stayed in her world, she was invincible.

Of course, there were limits. She couldn't forcefully drag others into her world. If that were possible, she really would be invincible, so that kept her power balanced. But a power that made her invincible as long as she stayed in hiding was boring. She would never settle for something so dull.

So she decided to make entrances to her realm throughout the world. She created countless entry points, putting them in places like the darkness of an alleyway, the depths of a cave, the inside of a closet, and the door at the end of an impossible hallway. As a result, a fair number of people wandered in unintentionally, and she made sure to politely receive and crush all of her visitors.

There were some plainly obvious entrances to her realm as well, so people often came to save those who had wandered in, or to challenge Alice herself. Those who were bold enough to enter her realm intentionally must have been quite confident in their abilities, but in the end, Alice just toyed with them until they died.

If one wanted to defeat Alice, entering her "Another Kingdom" realm was the wrong move to make. They would need to find a way of luring her outside of it. Just heading into her world was tantamount to suicide. So when that boy entered her realm, she thought he was just another of her idiot visitors.

She first noticed him when he made it through the welcome area and into the forest, writing him off as being a little above average. She started to take a small interest in him when he made it through to the graveyard, though.

The graveyard area was a significant jump in difficulty. The souls of those who had entered Alice's realm and died challenging her were forced to wait there to fight off intruders. In short, if one wasn't strong enough to defeat every challenger she had ever faced, they couldn't even make it through the graveyard. Powerful beings from Heroes to spawn of the Dark Gods wandered inside. As time passed and more challengers made their way to her, her realm became stronger and stronger.

But the boy passed through the graveyard area without even slowing down. At that point, she realized he was more promising than any challenger she had faced before. He then opened the gate to the castle without any keys. Normally, one would need to obtain a key from each of the previous areas to get through, but Alice wasn't all that bothered by him skipping that step.

The boy entered her throne room and faced her directly. She looked into his abilities. If he was this strong, he must have had the support of a Sage, she thought. His name was Shigeto Mitadera, a Sage candidate summoned by Sion. But the Gift he had received from her was gone. If he'd had a Sage's Gift, she could have figured out the details of his abilities. He must have obtained a Gift from a different source as a way of countering that advantage.

The boy challenged her to a fight, so she summoned four knights to combat him. That should have been the end. Within Another Kingdom, the knights were invincible. There was no way to defeat them, nor was there any way to defend against their attacks.

And yet, all four were defeated. At that point, she could no longer pretend to be relaxed. Defeating the knights was impossible for an outsider. It defied all expectations and calculations. The power of her realm had been undermined at its foundation.

She finally realized there was something different about Shigeto. An impenetrable darkness had entered her world, one that her powers were useless against.

She immediately decided to flee. Her invincibility within Another Kingdom had been called into question. Naturally, she wouldn't be able to stubbornly stick to that one ability. That was enough for her to give up her reliance on it. So Alice teleported to the infinite hallway that made up the entrance of her realm. The hallway was lined with countless doors and stretched on forever. As an entrance that temporarily held her visitors, no matter which door one went through, it would lead into her realm. But Alice

was different. She could use the doors to get to any of the entrances she had created across the world.

Using everything she could, she piled attacks on Shigeto to distract him while she ran. But where would she go? She hesitated. She should get as far away as she could, close off this world, and create a new one. If she didn't create any entrances into that new world, she would escape. However, that was the same as admitting defeat. She would live forever in fear that Shigeto would come after her again. Though she had already lost to him once, her pride wouldn't allow any more than that. Rather than running and hiding, she needed to find a way to fight back.

But she had already tried everything she could. At this point, she was helpless.

"I need help? *Me*?"

The words alone were so shameful it made her head spin. Though she had ruled as a despot for so long, all she could do now was run as fast as she could and pathetically beg for help. The thought of that was enough to make her boil with anger, but the calm part of her knew she had no choice.

"The Great Sage... Well, he probably won't help..." A number of Sages had been killed already. However, the Great Sage hadn't raised a finger to help a single one of them. "I have no way of contacting Raiza...and I want to avoid Van if possible. I definitely won't be able to get along with Akemi, and who knows what Gorouzaburou will ask in return if I go to him for help. That leaves...Yoshifumi?"

Even as she spoke, her words surprised herself. Every time they had met had resulted in them bad-mouthing each other. If she went to him for help, she would be answered with a torrent of insults. But even if he cursed her out the whole time, he would likely help her in the end.

"Fine then! For now I just need to get out! If I end up near Yoshifumi, it'll be by chance!"

Alice opened the closest door and stepped through.

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Shigeto and Navi floated in an empty void, the remains of Another Kingdom that Alice had created. It was an environment with no light or air that would have killed an ordinary person instantly, but thanks to the Omega

Blade, Shigeto had no problem surviving.

"It appears she is attempting to destroy the space." Navi had been given detection and combat abilities, so she was able to grasp the situation to a degree and communicate that information to Shigeto.

"Can we teleport out of here?"

"Yes. While we cannot teleport inside without permission, we can leave without issue."

"Okay then, let's go find another Sage. There was one with a really long name, right?"

"You mean Gorouzaburou?"

"Yeah, him. Can he create a closed world like this too?"

"No, he is specialized exclusively for combat. He has no particularly unique abilities."

"I'm surprised he was able to become a Sage."

"He has the ability to cut anything with his sword, but it is a bit lacking compared to the other Sages."

"Okay, teleport me right beside him. This time I should be able to see him straight away, right?"

"Yes. There are no obstacles to the teleportation, so you will appear immediately in front of him."

"Do it."

Navi started a countdown. As she finished, their surroundings changed once more.

A man and woman lay entwined on a bed. While they were quite invested in their current activity, perhaps they noticed the intruder, as they immediately stopped what they were doing.

"I assume the guy is Gorouzaburou?" Shigeto said.

The man was a dirty-looking, middle-aged fellow.

"Yes, that is correct."

Shigeto looked around. It was a small room. Torture devices filled the space and seemed to be in use. Perhaps as a result of the torture they were used for, there were women with no hands or feet and women with objects piercing their bodies crying out in pain on the floor.

The woman engaged with Gorouzaburou at the moment was missing a part of her body as well. It seemed the Sage was a man of particular tastes.

"This is pretty disgusting. I'm starting to feel nauseous."

“The Omega Blade is nigh-omnipotent, but it does not manage the mental state of its bearer, so please be careful. There are some things that can harm your mental state simply by seeing them, and the sword cannot protect you from that.”

“I see. I guess I should be more careful.”

The room looked as if it should smell awful, but Shigeto didn’t smell anything. The odors must have been blocked out by the Omega Blade.

“Who the hell are you?!” Gorouzaburou finally burst out in delayed anger.

“A bit late to be getting angry, don’t you think?” If Shigeto had wanted to, he could have killed the Sage a hundred times over by now. “I’m Shigeto Mitadera. I’m here to kill Sages.”

“The hell?!” Gorouzaburou jumped up from his bed.

“Okay, teleporting right beside them might force us to see something ugly like this. Next time, let’s teleport a little distance away.”

“Understood.”

Gorouzaburou’s left arm fell to the ground. He must have tried something with the sword in his right hand. The attack had been reflected, and he ended up wounding himself.

“Omega Blade, heal the injuries of everyone in this room.”

At Shigeto’s instruction, the torture devices in the room shattered. They must have been in the way of the healing process. The women inside the room were instantly healed of their injuries, as was Gorouzaburou. Shigeto hadn’t intended to heal the Sage, but since the man was inside the room, it happened anyway.

“What’s your game here, bastard? You think you’re some superhero or somethin’?!”

“Not at all. I just thought it was all painful to look at.” Of course, if that was really the case, he could have simply erased all of the injured people from the room, so Gorouzaburou’s guess may not have been far off. “Okay, what should I do with this guy?”

Gorouzaburou glared at him but otherwise didn’t act. He must have been on guard after his previous attack was reflected.

“Wait, I can mess with the Battlesong system, right?” Shigeto asked Navi.

“Yes, you can change it however you wish.”

“Omega Blade, remove Gorouzaburou’s Gift. Is that good enough?”

“Yes. His Gift has been removed, though you cannot tell just by looking

at him."

"I guess I'll have to test it out, then."

Shigeto stepped closer to the Sage, who responded by swinging his sword. The movement was so slow that even Shigeto could follow it. He let the attack hit him dead on, but it struck the invisible barrier around him. The reflected attack wasn't enough to so much as injure Gorouzaburou. Apparently, he wasn't all that skilled in swordplay, and without the Gift he was no more than an amateur.

"Huh. There doesn't seem to be much point in killing him anymore, does there?"

"Will you let him go, then?"

"No. That would be just as boring. I'll kill him anyway." A cute girl like Alice was worth sparing to watch her suffer in frustration, but a filthy middle-aged man like this had nothing to offer him. "Omega Blade, kill Gorouzaburou."

The moment he finished speaking, the Sage collapsed. It was almost unsatisfying.

"All right, on to the next one."

"No, please wait a moment."

"What's wrong?"

"Gorouzaburou is still alive."

Shigeto looked down at the fallen Sage. Though he had collapsed, his fingers were still twitching.

"What's going on? Isn't the sword supposed to be omnipotent?"

"It executed your order to kill him perfectly."

"Wait, does that mean he came back to life after dying?"

"There seems to be an object from another world buried inside him. That is what revived him. It is unrelated to the Battlesong system, so your previous order failed to neutralize it."

"Then I'll just take it out of him. Omega Blade, remove the object inside Gorouzaburou's body." As he spoke, the Sage's back exploded, a small translucent stone bursting out of it. The stone floated up and into Shigeto's palm.

"So this is what you were talking about? What is it?"

"As the source of the Sages' power, they call it a Philosopher's Stone."

"Do we need it?"

“If you wish to become a Sage, then I suppose.”

“I guess not, then. Here.” Shigeto handed the stone to one of the women in the room.

“Huh? Umm, what is this?”

“I don’t need it, so you can have it. If you want to save Gorouzaburou, put it back in his body, I guess. If you want him to die, then take it somewhere else.”

The woman immediately jumped to her feet and hurried out of the room. The rest of the women, still clearly in shock, streamed out of the room after her. Soon, the only ones left were Shigeto, Navi, and the Sage.

Gorouzaburou was barely breathing. The wound in his back would no doubt prove fatal, so even if they did nothing, he would die soon. Having lost interest in him entirely, Shigeto turned his attention elsewhere.

“So, next would be Akemi, I guess. That’s a woman, right?”

“Yes.”

“Like I said, let’s avoid teleporting right beside her this time. I don’t want to have to deal with a situation like this again.”

“Understood.”

“Okay, teleport me to Akemi.”

Navi began her countdown.

Chapter 16 — A Girl Falling from the Sky Is a Rather Standard Development!

“Around here, I guess?”

At Yogiri’s instruction, Hiruko brought them to a stop. Below them was a forest with a large hole in the middle of the canopy. Given the path of destroyed earth leading from there to the capital, it must have been where the monster had emerged.

“This is all well and good, but we’re not going to find any clues about Euphemia here, are we?” asked Yogiri.

“Miss Euphemia chose to fight against a god named Zakuro, did she not?” Hanakawa asked. “Is it not possible she lost and is thus lying collapsed somewhere nearby?”

“Let’s take a look. Hiruko, take us into the hole, please.”

“Jeez, how arrogant can you be?! And you don’t even care, do you?! I gotta say, you’ve got guts!” As she spoke, Hiruko lowered them into the hole in the forest. The bottom was strewn with broken chunks of stone of all sizes, lending credence to the theory that the monster had burst up from underground.

Once they landed, Yogiri looked around. “If she was lying around here, she was probably crushed.”

This had been an underground city, but there were few traces of it remaining. The majority of the place had been destroyed by the collapsing rock.

“There was a teleporter here, wasn’t there?” Tomochika said, a sour expression on her face. “Even if we find Euphemia, it’s starting to look doubtful we’ll be able to use it.”

“We’ve got no clues at all, huh?” Yogiri replied.

“Mokomoko, can Enju analyze the area?” Tomochika asked.

“Hmm. While her vision is excellent, she is not equipped with any functions that significantly surpass a human’s.”

Yogiri looked around carefully again but still found nothing. “Maybe this was pointless.”

“Can you stop whining? I’m the one who had to carry us all here, so it was my effort that was wasted.”

“Now what? If she’s not here...maybe the capital?”

“It is possible,” Mokomoko said. “The individual that she met here, Zakuro, called the monster ‘the Overlord’ and seemed to serve it in some capacity. It is quite possible he has gone in the same direction, and our only potential clue as to Euphemia’s whereabouts seems to be to question him.”

“Hiruko, please take us to the capital.”

“Okay, your insolence is getting to be too much. It’s almost starting to get amusing.”

“Hey, what’s that?” Luu pointed up into the air.

Yogiri looked up to see a door. It wasn’t attached to anything and was just floating in the air. Aside from that, it looked like a plain, unadorned wooden door.

“Was that here when we arrived?” he asked.

“I don’t think so,” Tomochika answered.

“No, such a thing existing would be beyond the scope of our imaginations,” Hanakawa said. “With such low visibility, even if we were told it was there from the start, we would probably believe it...”

“Do you know what that is, Hiruko? You’re supposed to be a god, right?”

“Don’t think I know everything just ’cause I’m a god! But hey, it’s a door. If you’re curious, just open it.”

Before they had a chance, however, the door opened on its own, a person leaping through it.

“Ow! What the heck? What’s going on?! This was supposed to be a cave.” A girl in a pink dress fell from the door. Maybe she had landed too hard, because her level of complaining was extreme.

“Oh! A girl falling from the sky is a rather standard development! Yes, I understand! I am sure I am going to be ignored at this point, *but* we have no idea what this is all about yet, so please let me dream!”

“Why are there so many people here?!” The girl was clearly shocked to see them.

Considering they were in the remains of a collapsed cave, it was now a bit of a crowd.

“So...any ideas?” Yogiri hesitated. He had no idea how to deal with a girl suddenly popping out of a door in midair.

“How about you try talking to her?” Tomochika suggested.

“Okay. Who are you, and how did you appear like that?” Yogiri made no attempt to introduce himself. They were being targeted by the Malnarilna sect, so with no knowledge of whether she was affiliated with them, it was best to hide their identities.

“Why should I tell you?” Of course, from her perspective, the six of them were strangers wandering around a cave. It wasn’t surprising that she would be on guard herself.

Forcing her to talk wasn’t necessary, though, so while Yogiri wondered about what to do, Luu pointed at the newcomer.

“That person has part of my body.”

“What do you mean? Are you saying she has a Philosopher’s Stone?”

“Yeah. It’s inside her own body.”

“Does that mean she’s a Sage?” If she had a Philosopher’s Stone, that was almost certain.

“Isn’t that just a bit too convenient?!” Hanakawa complained. “That is far too bizarre of a development!”

“Maybe, but she’s here, right? I don’t think we can complain.”

“Tomochika, have you lost all sense of shame?! How can you act so calm in such a ridiculous situation?!”

“I mean...a lot has happened,” Tomochika murmured, looking off into the distance.

“While I traveled alone, a development like this would inevitably end up subjecting me to a horrible fate, but this time things shall not be the same! Not with Sir Takatou here! Now, drop the hammer of God upon that wicked Sage!”

“I can’t. If I kill her, the Philosopher’s Stone loses its power.”

Sages used the stones as a source of power. It gave them the ability to regenerate forever. If Yogiri killed the Sage, the Philosopher’s Stone would exhaust itself in a futile attempt to revive them, according to Sion.

“My name is Yogiri Takatou. If you’re a Sage, maybe you’ve heard of me?”

“Takatou... I think Sion mentioned something about you.”

“We’ve been going around fighting Sages and collecting Philosopher’s

Stones. If you give us yours, we won't have to fight. So how about it?"

"Hmm, I don't know. You're the one who killed Santarou, right?"

"And Lain, and Sion, and Raiza." Though technically he hadn't personally killed the latter two, he didn't feel like explaining. The information should have been enough to threaten her.

"O-Oh. But so what? Doesn't that just mean I'm stronger than all of them?"

"What are you wasting your time for?" Hiruko interjected, looking at Yogiri.

"I just thought it would be easier if we didn't have to fight," he explained.

"Come on, if she's got part of Ma's body, you just gotta take it. Don't waste your time with all this jibber jabber."

Hiruko suddenly vanished and then appeared beside the Sage a moment later, her arm embedded in the girl's chest.

"Wha..."

"Hmm. It should be here somewhere... Ah, there it is! Found it!"

Pulling her arm out, Hiruko held up a round, translucent stone. The Sage, meanwhile, collapsed, clutching her chest.

Showing off the stone proudly, Hiruko walked back over to them.

"So you take your time walking back, huh?" Tomochika commented.

"Once the job's done, you gotta revel in it a bit, right?"

"Noooo!!! Another beautiful girl wasted!" Hanakawa cried.

"Here, Ma." Hiruko handed the stone to Luu. The moment Luu touched it, it immediately transformed. The solid, round stone melted into some sort of liquid and was absorbed into her hand. At the same time, Luu started to transform. As they watched, she got bigger. Her child-like face seemed to become a little more mature. She grew taller and her arms and legs grew a bit longer. She had changed from a three-year-old to a six-year-old.

"I got bigger again, daddy!"

"Cool, I guess?"

"Hold on! Ma is giving you such a cute smile! Can't you give her a better response than that?!"

"We really got lucky this time, didn't we?" Yogiri said.

"Yeah, well, we can't waste any more time here," Tomochika answered. "We have to look for Euphemia."

"You people! How can you act like this is all finished when our beautiful

Sage still has a hideous wound in her chest?!" Hanakawa ran over to the fallen girl. "Are you okay?!" He put his hands on her, and a gentle glow enveloped her.

"Huh? Why?" The Sage was taken by surprise. Hanakawa's healing magic had restored her to perfect health.

"I am not like those monsters over there! There is no way I could abandon a beautiful young girl in her time of need! In addition, no matter how slim, it provides a chance of you falling for me and becoming the start of my harem!"

"You know, Hanakawa," Tomochika sighed, "if you didn't say stuff like that, you might actually have a chance with a girl someday."

"Umm...thanks..." the Sage replied.

"Huh? Oh. Err, I expected you to insult me anyway, so I am not sure how to react to being thanked."

"Okay, fine. I'll help you out."

"Uh, what do you—"

"Another Kingdom!" the Sage shouted, and the world turned dark. The sudden blackness soon split, revealing new scenery.

"What just happened?" Yogiri asked. They were in a completely new place. Though the rocky ground hadn't changed, it was now surrounded by an expansive meadow. A huge gate stood in front of them, with walls stretching from either side of it.

"What the hell is going on?!" Hiruko screamed.

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The moment the Sage shouted, Hanakawa felt a powerful impact strike him. It felt like he was being thrown around by intense winds.

"Gaaaaah! What is happening?!"

He was being thrown around so violently that he couldn't tell the difference between up and down. He tried to flap his arms and legs and regain some sort of balance, but it wasn't working. Then, he hit something. After bouncing a few times, he came to a stop and immediately felt relieved. It had seemed like the violent winds would continue forever, but somehow he had made it out.

Lying on his back, he looked up at the sky. He was in a forest. They had

been in an underground cavern earlier, but it seemed he had been thrown back to the surface.

"I-I do not understand what just happened, but it looks like I'm...safe?" He glanced around to try and figure where he was and saw the young Sage sitting nearby.

"Gyaaaah!"

"You don't have to act so surprised. I just saved you, after all."

"Err, uhh..."

"Maybe 'saved' is too strong a word. You were just outside the range of it because you were too close to me."

"Ah, umm...I see. Thank you for saving me..." Hanakawa looked to his left and right. The rest of his companions were nowhere to be seen.

Now then...this appears to be an absolutely awful situation.

He had thought he would be safe as long as he was near Yogiri, but he had been quite easily ripped from Yogiri's side. In short, he had no guarantee of safety. If this pink-dressed girl was a Sage, that would put her on the same level as Aoi and Yoshifumi. She would be able to kill someone like him with no effort at all.

Ah, I have made a terrible mistake. I should have feigned death for a while...

He doubted she would have remained in the area for long. If he hadn't moved, she likely would have left without a second glance at him.

"Umm...may I ask what on earth just happened?"

"I used my power to get out of that place," she answered plainly. She didn't sound hostile. "My power can create worlds. When I created one with them at the center, the blast knocked you away. Well, it wasn't exactly an easy trick, but it looks like I managed to trap them inside."

"I-I see..." It hadn't been a direct attack on Yogiri, as evidenced by the fact that the girl was still alive. Otherwise Yogiri's automatic defenses would have killed her. "Err...do you perhaps have some business with me?"

He waited, but the girl merely sat there, watching him.

"Do you know much about this area?" she finally asked.

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“Well, it is not as if I am totally unfamiliar with it...” He had traveled with Shigeto’s party to the capital and then spent a good deal of time living there. He could say he knew a bit more than someone who had never been to the region before.

“Okay then, show me around.”

“Me?!”

“I don’t have much power right now. With my Philosopher’s Stone gone, I can only make one world at a time.”

“Should you really be telling me that?!”

“Who knows? But you helped me when I was hurt even though you’d never seen me before. Doesn’t that make you a good guy?”

“Ah, ha ha ha...I wonder about that.”

“My name is Alice. What’s yours?”

“I am Daimon Hanakawa.”

“Hanakawa, huh? Take me to Yoshifumi in the capital.”

“Yoshifumi?” Hanakawa had no idea how to tell her that Yoshifumi was already dead.

Chapter 17 — Sometimes You Gotta Be Gentle, Sometimes Harsh, and Sometimes Really Vague! The World Isn't Always Black and White!

"Hanakawa's gone again."

The rest of the group was in a totally new environment.

"Oh, he is. And that Sage is gone too," Tomochika observed, looking around. The mountain of stone chunks they were sitting on was about three meters across. Hanakawa had been farther away than that, so it seemed he had escaped their current situation.

"Hm. The ground we were standing on appears to have remained the same. Perhaps the area around us was teleported," Mokomoko speculated. Yogiri agreed.

"There's no way someone could teleport me against my will," Hiruko replied. "She must've changed the world around us. That would work no matter how strong I was."

"I thought we'd be able to handle Sages no problem at this point, but it looks like we can't take them lightly," Yogiri remarked. It was possible to simply transform the area around them without attacking Yogiri directly, effectively imprisoning them. While the Sage couldn't kill Yogiri, she could still seal him away.

"I guess we were done with her anyway."

"Can you do something about this, Hiruko?" asked Yogiri.

"Who d'you think you're talking to? Something like this is a piece of cake to me."

"I seem to remember you screaming the loudest earlier..."

"Shut up! Anyone would have been surprised!"

"Okay, then get us out of here."

If the place they were in was a different space, Yogiri could use his power

easily enough. The target would be clear and defined, so he would have no problem killing it. But if Hiruko could get them out instead, he figured it was better to leave it to her.

"Seriously, what is your deal?"

"You're the one who said me acting insolent was getting interesting."

"There's a limit to these things, y'know? At least try worshiping me a little bit. I *am* a god!"

"Fine. Please do something about this."

"I don't think just saying 'please' counts as appropriate for asking something of a god...but whatever. I'll show you a bit of my tolerant side."

"Hold on!" As Hiruko began spinning her arms, Tomochika hurriedly stopped her.

"What?"

"Luu is gone!"

"What're you talking about? Ma is right...huh. Where is she?!"

Luu had walked through the gate while the rest of them were talking.

"Can you still get us all out?"

"No. She needs to be right beside us."

Cheerful music flowed out from inside the gate. It seemed it had been enough to lure Luu away.

"Let's go grab her." Hiruko headed for the gate, and the others followed her.

Passing through, they made it into an open square. Colorful trees and numerous houses filled the space, with what looked like human-sized animal costumes dancing to welcome them.

"Uh, what exactly is this place?" Tomochika asked. "It looks kind of like an amusement park."

"Why does it exist here?"

"No idea. Let's just go find Luu."

It didn't take long for them to locate her. She was being carried around by a bear.

"Ma! What're you doing, running off like that!" Stomping over to her mother, Hiruko grabbed her out of the bear's arms.

"It looked like fun."

"This place appeared out of nowhere! You gotta be more careful! Seriously!"

“Okay. I’ll be careful, but let me eat some candy!”

“*Here*?!”

A sweet smell filled the air. It suddenly occurred to Yogiri that with everything that had happened, it had been a while since they’d eaten anything.

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“Please, spare me...”

The Sage Akemi begged on her hands and knees, pressing her face into the floor. Shigeto looked down on her, the Sage’s Philosopher’s Stone in his hand. The moment he had arrived, he had taken her stone. After that, he showed off his power a bit.

Akemi’s abilities were useless against him. She possessed some sort of mental manipulation with which she had instigated the people around them to attack Shigeto, but he had restrained them effortlessly. She had tried to control him as well, of course, but it hadn’t had any effect.

“This is kind of boring, to be honest, but I’ve already made up my mind.”

“Please...please...”

“Come on, you’ve been acting all high and mighty since you became a Sage, right? Shouldn’t you have some pride even if you’re losing?”

She seemed to have no problem toying with people’s lives while she was in control, but when on the receiving end, she was pathetic. Shigeto thought that seeing her so terrified and obedient would be gratifying, but for some reason it wasn’t.

“Huh. I wonder why tormenting her isn’t as much fun as I expected. What do you think, Navi?”

“Perhaps it is because she is so much older?”

“Ah! That must be it. Torturing an older woman isn’t nearly as entertaining, I guess. Hey, look at me.”

Akemi lifted her face. She was quite attractive, but her servile smile didn’t interest Shigeto in the least. He didn’t sense a glimmer of her soul in it at all. Alice had struggled up to the last moment. She had run away in the end, but she had never given in to despair.

“A-Anything... I’ll do anything...”

“Oh, will you? But I can already do anything I want, so what would I even

need you to do?"

Akemi tried to cling to him as she begged, but she couldn't get close enough. The invisible wall pushed her back.

"Die," Shigeto whispered.

Understanding that as a command, the Omega Blade put an end to her life. Strength left the Sage's body, and she slumped to the floor. Then, "Revive her," he said, another idea occurring to him.

Akemi's body spasmed, followed by a scream. She had been brought back to life, still gripped by a fear of death. Her expression twisted in agony, she looked around the room. She didn't seem to know what had just taken place.

"She's from another world, isn't she? Why can she come back to life?"

"Since her death was so recent, she can be revived with a greater degree of accuracy. However, I would not count on it to be that reliable."

"I see. All right, then let's try this. Omega Blade, every time she breathes, age her by one year. When she dies, revive her at her current age."

Akemi began to age so fast, they could see her change before their eyes. Realizing what had happened, she slapped a hand over her mouth and nose.

"Don't worry, I said you'd come back to life if you died."

Unable to hold her breath for long, she continued to grow older and more wrinkled. Eventually her breathing stopped, and she grew younger again.

"Why... Why are you doing this?"

"No reason. You guys mess with regular people to kill time. I'm just doing the same back to you."

"What did I ever do to you?!"

"*I* never did anything to you Sages, but I was summoned here and suffered through all sorts of things."

His idea hadn't ended up being all that interesting, but possessing infinite power could make people irrational.

"I thought your objective was to kill the Sages," Navi said. "Will you not finish her off?"

"No, I'm done with her. She can keep going like this until she loses her mind. I guess I'll go after Alice again. I'm curious to see what she's thought up."

"Shall I teleport us?"

"No. I don't want things to get too monotonous. Let's try to think of a better plan."

Shigeto started looking into Alice's situation.

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"No way! I can't let you eat this questionable food!" Hiruko shouted as the five of them sat in a café.

"I don't think it's that dangerous," Yogiri said around a mouthful of cake. Numerous desserts were arrayed on the table in front of them. The café offered a number of desserts in a buffet style.

"Are y'sure? There are so many situations where you can never go home after eating food from another world!"

"You can do something about this place though, right?"

"Sure I can! But shouldn't you still be careful?!"

Yogiri picked up any poison or rotten food as killing intent aimed at him, so he could guarantee that the food in front of them was safe.

"And what're *you* getting all excited about?" Hiruko demanded.

"Huh? Me?" Tomochika answered, surprised.

"Yes, you. The heck is that thing on your head?"

Tomochika was wearing a cat-ear headband. She had gotten it at a souvenir shop just inside the entrance. They didn't need money to do anything here, so they could take what they wanted from the store and eat as much as they wanted for free. The animals worked diligently to make more food for them.

"It's cute, isn't it?"

"Yeah!" Luu was wearing a bunny ear headband as well.

"How're you acting so calm in such a weird place?"

"We're not really in a hurry, so why not relax a bit? We *did* just get a Philosopher's Stone for free."

"I don't care, it makes no difference to me. But *you* guys are the ones looking for someone, yeah? Are you sure about wasting time here?"

"If every second counted, we'd already be too late, so there's no point in hurrying," Yogiri explained.

"You really march to the beat of your own drum, huh?"

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“Oh right, we’ve got this too.” Tomochika unfolded a pamphlet on the table. It was a guide to Another Kingdom. Apparently, that was the name of the place they were in.

Now that Yogiri thought about it, that was what the Sage had shouted before they’d found themselves here.

“A map, huh? Looks like a huge place.”

“I want to see the fairy tale area!” Luu said, happily pointing to a spot on the map. There were pictures of a merry-go-round, a Ferris wheel, and other cute play equipment drawn there.

Hiruko sighed. “Ma...this isn’t the time to be messing around.”

Although Yogiri had been the one to suggest they stop and eat, he agreed with the god. They couldn’t relax here for long. “Luu, if you want to stick around and play, that’s fine, but we’ll have to leave you behind.”

“What?!”

“Hey! How can you say that to Ma?! That’s just cruel!”

“Well, what do you want me to say?”

“Sometimes you gotta be gentle, sometimes harsh, and sometimes really vague! The world isn’t always black and white!”

“We can’t play around here forever, so we should try to think of a way out.”

“All we gotta do is go back to where we started. There’s a boundary there between this world and the other one—”

The loud ringing of a bell interrupted Hiruko’s explanation. The bell struck twelve times before stopping.

“Twelve o’clock? So it’s noon? Wait, is that really the time?”

Ever since leaving the Elven Forest, their sense of time had been a bit skewed. Yogiri checked his watch, but as he did, everything around them grew unnervingly quiet. The panda that had been dutifully replenishing their supply of desserts and the cat that had been working so hard in the kitchen had frozen.

“Something’s wrong...”

One of the windows suddenly shattered as something jumped through it. It was a small bear doll, holding a large knife.

Chapter 18 — Things Have Gone Totally Crazy Again!

The bear doll leaped forward, swinging its knife. Detecting killing intent, Yogiri used his power, and the bear immediately collapsed on top of the table, while the other animals in the café dropped to the floor as well.

"What was that about?!" Tomochika cried.

"Uhh...I guess they turn violent at a certain time?" he answered.

"Well, let's get out of here!"

Tomochika and Mokomoko immediately stood up and made for the exit with Yogiri close behind them. As they stepped out of the store, Hiruko and Luu joined them. All around them, the animals gave something like a war cry before falling to the ground.

"I'm not getting a chance to do much lately, am I?" Tomochika muttered, thinking something like these animals wouldn't have been too difficult for her to handle.

"My plan to prove the supremacy of the Dannoura Way in this other world is falling apart," Mokomoko complained.

"Uh, I don't really care about that. I just feel a little bad for making Takatou do all the work."

"There is no other option. Perhaps you could defeat something on the level of a dragon, but the levels of our recent opponents have been too great. They have been much more powerful than what can be handled with ancient martial arts..."

They continued to discuss things as they ran. They needed to get out of Another Kingdom. But as they headed for the gate they had entered through...

"What happened to the exit?!"

Where the gate should have been was a plain wall. There were no signs of an exit.

"Up we go, then!" Hiruko shouted as their bodies floated up into the air. It was just a wall, after all. All they had to do was jump over it, she thought.

However, as they floated above the gate, they ran into something. With a clicking sound, the pale wall jumped up to meet them. There appeared to be a barrier in place even above the walls.

“Since you’re a god, can’t you break through this?” Tomochika asked.

“Nope. The rules make it difficult. If we’d been thrown in here against our will, we could have forced our way out, but we walked in on our own. We’re kinda stuck now.”

“Huh? What do you mean, ‘we walked in on our own’?! We had no choice!” Tomochika cried.

“There were those rocks under us at the start, remember? That counted as being in the outside world. Everything around us was covered by this closed space. So once we stepped off those rocks, it was like we stepped into her world on our own, and at that point we gotta do whatever she says. That’s how it works.”

“That sounds like a scam!”

“Either way, that’s how it is.”

“But can she really keep us locked in here forever?”

“Hmm...I don’t know the rules of this place yet, but that’s usually impossible. There should be an exit somewhere, otherwise it would be easier to break out.”

“Is that how it works?”

“If she doesn’t set up rules, we don’t have to follow them either. Speaking of which, looks like flying this long is against the rules too.”

Hiruko suddenly dropped out of the sky. Some sort of power was pulling her back to the ground. Flying through Another Kingdom was clearly against the rules.

“In that case, there should be rules somewhere,” Yogiri said. “Dannoura, where did you get that pamphlet?”

“There was an information center at the start when we first came inside.”

It didn’t take long for them to find the information center again, so they were definitely in the same location where they had entered.

“There it is.” Yogiri grabbed a pamphlet from the information stand. “So, uhh...it says ‘The exit is here!’ in big letters.”

Animals continued to rush at them and subsequently drop to the ground as they read through the pamphlet. The exit was at the castle at the center of Another Kingdom, the symbolic center of this world. Getting inside the castle

required a key from each area, each of which was guarded by a boss.

"One, two, three, four...nine areas?" Hiruko counted. "And we're supposed to go to all of them?"

"No, according to this pamphlet it's just a door that's locked," Yogiri said. "In that case, I think I can get us through."

"Really? Rules that are super clear like this are pretty hard to break, you know."

"Let's go to the castle first. It's at least worth trying."

"If you say so, why not?"

Once again, Hiruko flew them up into the air. With unbelievable speed, they whizzed past the scenery around them and were in front of the castle in no time at all.

"Rushing to the center doesn't seem to be against the rules."

"This is a bit too easy," Tomochika said, slightly concerned.

"So this is the door, huh?" Yogiri said, looking up at the large castle gate standing in front of them. It was shut tight, with nine indentations on it. If they put the nine keys in, it should open.

"Die." Yogiri killed the door. Then, with a little push, it opened fairly easily.

"Huh? That's weird," Hiruko said. "We just came to take a look, so why was it so easy to get in?"

"That's my power." Yogiri didn't feel like explaining any more to the confused god. "But the exit is supposed to be inside here, right? Is there a back door or something?"

"The pamphlet doesn't say anything more. But we were supposed to beat nine bosses to get here, so maybe there's a last boss we're supposed to fight?" said Tomochika.

"Not that we fought any bosses! We didn't even get a single key!" Luu replied.

Passing through the castle gate, they entered a luxurious entrance hall. Climbing the staircase immediately in front of them, they made it to another large door, through which they found what appeared to be a throne room.

"No one here, huh?"

"Looks like someone left a note."

A piece of paper was stuck to the throne.

I'm not home. Please wait until I come back. —Alice

"Guess there's nothing we can do if she's not home—wait! Doesn't that mean there's no way out?!" Hiruko cried.

The door leading into the throne room swung shut on its own. Soon after, darkness started creeping in. The blackness spread across the walls, the floor, and the ceiling, from which something began to emerge. Knights clad from head to toe in armor stepped out of the darkness, turning their swords and spears on the group.

"Huh?! What the heck? Are these supposed to keep us busy 'til Alice gets back?"

"Yeah, I don't think we have the time for that." Yogiri considered their options. If this was a pocket dimension, he could try killing it outright. For such a clearly distinct place, he had no problem distinguishing between it and the real world, so it shouldn't affect anything on the outside. However, if he killed the world around them, there was no telling what would happen to them while they were still inside it.

"Hiruko, could you make a barrier around us or something?"

"Probably, but I think Ma is better at things like that."

"Can you do it, then, Luu?"

"Yeah!" As the girl answered, a bubble appeared around them.

"It's like making a totally new world," Hiruko explained. "The inside of this bubble is separate from the outside, so nothing in the outside world can affect us here."

That made things easy for Yogiri as well. All he had to do was kill the closed space outside their bubble.

He killed Another Kingdom. Beyond the bubble, cracks began to run through otherwise empty space, as if glass were breaking. Before long, those cracks ran through everything, and then with a loud crash, the world outside exploded.

"Did we make it through?" Yogiri looked around. They were back in the dim underground cave, surrounded by piles of rubble.

"Hanakawa and that Sage are gone," Tomochika noted. The area was quiet, with no signs of anyone else around.

"Who the heck *are* you?" Hiruko asked, staring at Yogiri.

"This is just my specialty." Still feeling that explaining was too much

effort, he gave her another vague answer.

"You've got some pretty unique skills, huh?"

"Daddy is awesome!" For some reason, Luu seemed really proud.

"Well, as long as you're on my side. That was kind of a waste of time, though, wasn't it?"

"Since you can do that, we could have made it out from anywhere, couldn't we?" Tomochika asked.

"I thought it would be better if we found a proper exit." Yogiri wanted to avoid killing things like "space" as much as possible.

"I think we've been moving a bit too slowly. Can we start flying again?" asked Hiruko.

"I'll do it!" Luu raised a hand. "I'm stronger now, so I can handle it!"

"All right, I'll leave it to you."

"Okay!"

Their bodies once again floated up into the air. As Luu had said, it felt much more stable than before.

"What should we do about Hanakawa?"

"If he's not here, there's not much we *can* do. Considering his luck, I'm sure he'll be fine."

"Man...he's no friend of mine, so I don't really care, but you guys..." Tomochika muttered.

As they floated out of the underground cavern and into open air, they saw that the sky was dyed red around them.

"Huh?" said Tomochika in confusion. The dark red of the sky made it feel like it had been drenched in blood. A roar of thunder could be heard in the distance as black lightning struck the ground. "Things have gone totally crazy again!" she shouted up at the sky.

Chapter 19 — I Suppose Sir Takatou Did Not Use His Instant Death Power? Does That Mean There Is a Chance He Is Still Alive?

Shigeto went over the situation in Akemi's room. In the corner of his vision, he could see Akemi continuously aging to death and then reviving, young again, but he had already lost interest in her, so she was no more than scenery to him at this point.

Finding out where Alice had gone was no challenge. He only had to ask the Omega Blade anything he wanted to know. It would give him any information he requested.

Alice was in the Empire of Ent. He stopped to think about why she might have gone there. The Omega Blade was capable of reading the thoughts of those who were born in this world, but since Alice had been brought here from another world, it couldn't read hers. The best he could do was speculate about her motives, but in this case it wasn't that hard to guess what she was up to.

She had scurried away from the fight, totally outmatched. There was no doubt she had gone looking for help. Yoshifumi was in the Empire of Ent. Shigeto didn't know what the relationship between the Sages was like, but there was always a chance that Alice and Yoshifumi were on good terms.

"By the way, when I asked about the locations of the Sages, Yoshifumi's name didn't come up, did it?"

"His location was unable to be determined," Navi confirmed.

"Why is that?"

"After he entered the Elven Forest, he never emerged. His whereabouts from that point on are unknown."

"Is the Elven Forest a separate dimension too? There seem to be an awful lot of those."

“I suppose so.”

The Omega Blade would only answer direct questions. It wouldn’t provide information related to a different question he’d asked. That was something Shigeto needed to be careful with.

“Okay, then let’s go to the capital of Ent.”

“Understood.”

After Navi’s countdown, they teleported again. Before them was a mountain of rubble. The once beautifully ordered city had been reduced to scattered ruins.

“What happened here?”

“A large creature seems to have attacked the city.”

“How did that happen?”

Shigeto had spent a short time living here, but now the area had been destroyed. He couldn’t help but be shocked. How could there be a monster large enough to do this, and why would it attack the capital? He had no idea.

“Here is what happened. The nature of the monster is unknown, meaning it likely originated from a different world.”

Images of the capital being destroyed appeared in front of Shigeto’s eyes. A multiheaded monster was trampling over the city. The adventurers and imperial army fought back, but they were helpless to stop it. Yoshifumi’s subordinate Luna had attempted to erase the creature but had been unable to stop it either. At one point, the monster began to writhe in pain, but in the end, it reached the castle and disappeared underground.

“What do you mean, it ‘likely’ came from another world? Shouldn’t there be records of something like that?”

“Unfortunately, the records of this world only stretch back about a hundred years.”

“Damn. The more I learn about this sword, the less it can do.”

“There are other restrictions as well, but in most cases, the Omega Blade is capable of doing anything that is needed, so I did not feel a need to inform you of its limitations in advance.”

“So, according to those records, Yoshifumi never left the Elven Forest, right?”

“That is the most likely possibility. There is a chance he moved to another dimension from within that one, though.”

“Okay. Can I just erase the Elven Forest, then?”

“Yes. That is possible, but how would you like to do it?”

“Just literally erase it. Make the whole area a barren wasteland. Anyone inside will die, right?”

“Correct. If you erase an area, anyone inside will be erased along with it. Since they will never appear again, it can be considered the same as dying.”

“Omega Blade, erase the Elven Forest.”

“Understood. It has been erased.”

“Already?” Shigeto was almost disappointed by how fast it had been done.

“Would you like to see?”

“Good idea. Take me up into the air. No need for a countdown anymore; I’m used to it.”

A moment later, he was floating in the sky. While he could have simply created an image showing him what he wanted to see, it felt more real to see things with his own eyes.

He looked to the west. The large forest dividing East and West Ent had vanished.

“There’s no sign of Yoshifumi escaping, right?”

“Correct. No one left the forest before it was erased. Everything within the forest is gone and thus can be considered dead.”

“I did this?”

“Yes.”

How many things had lived in the forest? Shigeto had erased them all with a single order. It had been disappointingly simple. It hadn’t even taken a moment. It had happened exactly as he’d ordered, merely because he had ordered it. He had power over all of creation. He could erase and create worlds at will. He could change anything to match his imagination. He was finally starting to realize just how much power he now had here. He was truly something close to a god.

After looking down for a while, it occurred to him he was still in the middle of killing the Sages. With this much power, he had no need to play at fighting with them. All he had to do was order them to die. But he had decided to kill them only after seeing them all face to face. If he didn’t do that, it would be little more than checking a box on a list. He wanted to feel like he had accomplished it himself.

“Is there anyone left in the capital?”

“Most of the people either escaped or died. Two of Yoshifumi’s subordinates remain.”

“Teleport me to them.”

Shigeto teleported from the sky into a room. It seemed to be part of a destroyed building. A short distance from him were two women, crouched low to the ground—two of Yoshifumi’s Four Heavenly Kings, Abby and Luna.

“Hey.”

“You...” Abby glared at him.

“What’s wrong? You look like you’re about to die.”

“You were supposed to be with Yoshifumi. What the hell are you doing here?! Where is he?!” Naturally, Abby was the one to bite. Luna just hung her head listlessly.

“Oh, Yoshifumi is dead. I killed him.”

Technically, it was possible that Yoshifumi had died before Shigeto had done anything, but that hardly mattered now.

“Like hell you did! How could someone like you kill Yoshifumi?!”

“That’s not important. For now, you’re going to be my subordinates.”

“Ha! I’d rather die, idiot!”

“Okay, then. Die.”

Luna’s head exploded, showering Abby with blood and brain matter. Shigeto had to show her their difference in power, and violence was the best way to do that. He decided to be a bit flashy about it.

“Wha...”

“Come back to life.”

As ordered, Luna’s head suddenly came back together like the scene was being rewound. The scattered chunks of flesh and drops of blood gathered back and reformed perfectly. The revived woman let out a bloodcurdling scream, the pain and fear from the moments before she had died still fresh in her mind.

“Wh-What the hell?! Who the hell are you?!”

“I’m the Omega Blade. You heard it could kill the Sages, right? But that’s only a small piece of its power. Everything in this world now conforms to my will. Even Yoshifumi would die in one hit to a power like this. He wouldn’t be able to fight back.”

“So what—”

“Die.” Abby’s entire body was shredded, becoming nothing more than a blood splatter. “Come back.” Her scattered remnants instantly reformed, and she screamed in agony. “Forcing you to obey me is easy enough, but that would be boring. I’m just going to torment you until you’re ready to lick my boots. When you’re ready to swear allegiance to me, let me know.”

Shigeto killed them in the flashiest ways he could before instantly reviving them, over and over and over. It didn’t take long at all before they surrendered.

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“Umm, the capital should be straight ahead this way, so I do not believe there is any need for me to accompany you further...”

At Alice’s request, Hanakawa was taking her to the capital. After leaving the forest, they came to an open plain where the capital could be seen in the distance.

“You’re a man, right? You can at least be a bodyguard for a frail young girl like myself, can’t you?” Alice was more or less powerless at this point. The little energy she had left had been spent on creating one last world.

“Umm, actually...Sir Yoshifumi is already dead! There is no point in heading to the capital now!”

Alice seemed to have high hopes for her fellow Sage, so it was difficult to tell her that Yoshifumi was dead, but Hanakawa managed to force it out anyway. After all, the longer he waited, the harder it would be to say.

“There’s no way Yoshifumi would die.”

“Actually, I happened to witness the event myself...”

“Okay, then how did it happen?”

“Uhh, he was stabbed with a knife, and then his Philosopher’s Stone was torn from his chest. He collapsed.”

“That wouldn’t kill him.” Alice brushed the idea off, wholly unconvinced.

“What?! No, no, no! He was most certainly dead!”

“Did you check?”

Hanakawa paused. “Er, no, there seemed to be no need...”

The Sage had dropped to the ground and stopped moving. But if asked if he was absolutely certain Yoshifumi was dead, Hanakawa couldn’t say that he was. He hadn’t checked Yoshifumi’s pulse or his eyes.

“But with Sir Takatou’s power, there is no chance he would still be alive,” he continued. “But wait, now that I think about it...”

Hanakawa recalled the events leading up to Yoshifumi’s death. Yoshifumi had thrown a knife at Yogiri, but it had vanished into thin air and then reappeared in his own chest. Then a woman with the ears of a fox, and dressed like a courtesan, had appeared and ripped the Philosopher’s Stone from the emperor’s chest. With his Philosopher’s Stone gone, Yoshifumi had fallen.

“Hmm...I suppose Sir Takatou did not use his instant death power after all? Does that mean there is a chance he is still alive?”

Normally, having a large hole in your chest was plenty fatal. But this was a mysterious world with things like magic and the Gift. It wouldn’t be that strange for a Sage to have survived such an encounter. Hanakawa figured even he could have pulled through with his Healing Magic.

“His power is really at the top, even among the Sages,” Alice said, “even though it’s kind of annoying to admit. That said, inside my own world, he couldn’t stop me!”

“However, were he to still be alive, I would very much be unable to meet him. The moment we met, I am sure he would kill me...”

Hanakawa had claimed neutrality, but he doubted Yoshifumi would let him off with that. Rather, he was absolutely certain that Yoshifumi would kill him immediately.

“Don’t worry, I’ll talk to him for you.”

“I find it hard to believe that will make a difference...” Hanakawa just wanted to go home, but at this point he didn’t really have a place that qualified. “A-Anyway, I can take you as far as the capital, but afterwards I will have to ask that you continue alone and keep my involvement a secret.”

“Really? You’ve got no ambition at all, huh?”

“My life is what is most important! I have no interest in gambling on Sir Yoshifumi’s mercy!”

“Well, never mind Yoshifumi, then. You can just come with me after. I’ll welcome you into my ranks.”

“Ah, ha ha ha...I will consider it—”

Hanakawa was interrupted by the sound of a lightning strike. Bewildered by the idea of lightning coming from a clear blue sky, he looked up only to find that the sky wasn’t blue at all. It had turned a dark red, like it had been

drenched in blood.

"What is happening?!"

"How should I know?"

Every once in a while, black lightning arced overhead. It seemed to be striking far away for now, but that was hardly a relief.

"Anyway, let us proceed to the capital!" Hanakawa wasn't sure if it was better to be inside during a lightning storm, but he wasn't brave enough to stick around in an open field. Luckily, they were rather close to the city already.

As they hurriedly approached, he felt like something was wrong. The large, sturdy walls of the city were enough to give an absolute feeling of safety to those within. He had seen those walls smashed apart and trampled down by an enormous monster earlier, and yet, they now stood proudly before him nonetheless.

Still utterly confused, they passed through the gate and into the city. The cityscape looked perfectly normal. The streets were crammed with people, and the stores were bustling.

"This must be Miss Luna's power!" Hanakawa recalled Luna's ability. She was able to erase and rebuild parts of the city at will, so maybe restoring it to its current state was similarly easy for her.

"We just need to go to that castle, right?" asked Alice.

Even if Yoshifumi had survived the encounter in the Elven Forest, Hanakawa had no idea where to find him, but that seemed like the best place to start.

"That seems to be—" As Hanakawa started to agree, he froze. Everything around him had changed. "Huh?"

Everything now glittered with gold. The floor, the ceiling, all the walls, and even the support pillars were made of gold. In front of him was a golden throne upon which sat a man wearing golden clothes. At the foot of the throne, Luna and Abby were bowing low to the floor.

"Yo, Hanakawa. It's been a while."

"Gyaaaaaah!" Hanakawa gave a bizarre scream.

Lounging casually on the golden throne with sparkling golden clothes was none other than Yoshifumi.

Chapter 20 — Keep Me Entertained as Long as You Can. I'll Keep You Alive as Long as You're Still Bawling

"That's not a nice way to greet someone, is it?" Yoshifumi stepped down from his throne, walking up to Hanakawa.

"Huh? Umm. I thought we had just walked into the capital?"

"I was waiting for you guys, but you were so slow, I just brought you straight here."

"Err, my apologies!"

Hanakawa decided to get on his hands and knees for now. He had no idea what was going on, but he felt it was best to assume Yoshifumi was upset. Planting his face on the floor, he apologized with everything he had. Even if he was angry, acting subservient should help to quell the emperor's rage, and he wouldn't be likely to attack someone who was totally defenseless. There was no guarantee that would save him, but it was a much better chance than just standing around like an idiot.

"Who are you?" Alice asked, nerves clear in her voice.

"I guess I can't say I expected to fool you."

The Sage's tone of voice changed, making him sound like a totally different person. Hanakawa looked up to see Shigeto Mitadera standing in front of him.

"Huh? What is going on?"

Shigeto should have been with Yoshifumi in the Elven Forest. Hanakawa had been teleported to Yogiri's side, and when he'd met up with Yoshifumi again, Shigeto was gone. He had assumed Yoshifumi had killed him at some point along the way.

"A lot happened. I have the Omega Blade now."

Err, that's the World Sword or whatever that goofy sounding weapon was, isn't it?!

Hanakawa decided not to voice the thought out loud. Something about Shigeto gave the impression of a ruler with absolute power. He instinctively understood that speaking out of turn here would be a bad idea.

"How did you take Sir Yoshifumi's form? I thought your power was only to create an unreliable Book of Prophecy?"

"The Omega Blade is an omnipotent sword. I've been trying out all the things it can do."

"If you're omnipotent, why are you waiting around here?" Alice was clearly suspicious. If he was really omnipotent, he was using rather roundabout methods.

"No reason, really. I just thought I might be able to surprise you."

"So...is that red sky your doing too?" Hanakawa asked.

"I wanted to see if I could change the sky's color."

"And the city being rebuilt?"

"I wanted to see if I could copy Luna's power."

"And the fact that people are living ordinary lives in the city again?"

"I made it so that the monster never attacked. For now, I just created people similar to the ones who lived here before and set them about their lives."

"And all this gold as well?"

"I wanted to see if I could do alchemy."

"That is absurd!"

Shigeto could teleport others at will, change his form, change the color of the sky, create a city with people living in it, and conjure gold from thin air. It all seemed like a game to him, and that casual flexing of his power was what scared Hanakawa most.

"You wanted Yoshifumi's help, huh?" Shigeto asked, turning back to Alice. "That's too bad."

"Are you an idiot or something? What do you want?" She was clearly bluffing. The Sage was obviously afraid, but didn't back down an inch.

"I've wondered the same thing myself, to be honest. But you know, by messing around with this omnipotent power, I've found that being able to do anything you want isn't all that fun in itself. So I've been trying a lot of things to see what's fun."

Uhh...what am I supposed to do now?

Hanakawa tried to think of a way out. If Shigeto was really omnipotent,

there was nothing Hanakawa could do against him. Disobeying him was impossible. In that case, he needed to find the best way to suck up to him.

"Ahh. Umm. I am not your enemy, so...we are classmates, correct? I will refrain from going so far as saying we got along well, but we were in the same class, so..."

"I didn't forget, Hanakawa."

"Huh? Forget about what?"

"You really don't remember, do you?" Shigeto sighed.

Huh? Can he possibly read my mind?

"I can't read the minds of people from other worlds, but I can read Hanakawa's. Why is that?" Shigeto asked no one in particular.

A small girl suddenly appeared at his side. Hanakawa remembered her as the manifestation of the Book of Prophecy.

"You can still read the minds of those with particularly low mental resistance. So even if from another world, you should be able to read the minds of an ordinary human."

Seeing Navi, Hanakawa remembered his last meeting with Shigeto in the capital.

"Ah, umm..."

"You made me beg on my hands and knees, remember?"

That was right. At their first meeting in the capital, Shigeto had begged Hanakawa to help Rei Kushima, and Hanakawa had gotten carried away.

"No, that was no more than a playful jest."

"I seem to remember you breaking my nose as well."

"That was Miss Navi stomping on the back of your head. I was the one who healed you afterwards!" *I got far too carried away! I should have thought ahead!*

"You really did go too far. Thinking back on it is enough to make me laugh." Despite his words, Shigeto's face was deathly serious.

"Yes, well, I thought that was my chance to—my humblest apologies!" Hanakawa slammed his face back into the floor. At this point, his best bet was to break his own nose and hope for pity.

"The Omega Blade has made me omnipotent, but it can't heal mental scars. That was a humiliating experience. It really taught me what it means to be boiling with anger. I always thought that once I saved Rei, I'd have to kill you someday."

Hanakawa squealed in fear. “Please, have mercy! At least spare my life!” He pushed his face harder into the floor.

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to kill you. Well, maybe I will, but I’ll bring you back to life after.”

“Uhh...you mean like a living hell...?”

“Keep me entertained as long as you can. I’ll keep you alive as long as you’re still bawling.”

Hanakawa began to sob exaggeratedly. For now, all he needed to do was survive. He’d do anything, he decided.

“So, how about you, Sage Alice? I thought you might try something, but you’ve just been standing there doing nothing. I’m pretty sure I’ve given you plenty of openings to attack.”

Alice had done nothing but glare at Shigeto. But that was to be expected. There was nothing she *could* do.

“What happened to Another Kingdom? Try it again. Don’t give up hope yet. There’s still a chance you could beat me.” Shigeto tried to egg her on, but Alice just bit her lip in frustration. “Did she already give up?” he asked Navi.

“The Sage Alice no longer possesses her Philosopher’s Stone. Her supply of magical energy is exhausted, so she is unable to use her powers,” the girl answered.

“I never took her stone, did I?”

“Shortly after she teleported away from us, a god named Hiruko stole it from her.”

“Oh, a god, huh? That sounds interesting, but what do I do about Alice? I wasn’t expecting this...”

Shigeto sank into thought. He might have been able to escape, but Hanakawa decided it was best not to try. His best bet was to do everything possible to avoid upsetting his classmate.

“Okay then, I’ll give you another one.”

As he spoke, something dropped to the floor in front of Alice. It was a round, transparent stone. Two more followed soon after.

“Huh?” Alice was in shock, never having expected her stone to be returned to her.

“There you go. With three, you should be three times stronger, right? Why don’t you try something now?”

“How... How did you get these?” she whispered.

“Who knows? I just told the Omega Blade to get me some. It could have grabbed them from anywhere.”

Alice gave a hollow laugh. “Are you serious?”

Shigeto’s actions only served to push her further into despair. The Philosopher’s Stones were the source of power for the Sages. How could she fight someone who was capable of snapping his fingers and having them appear in front of him? Hanakawa felt like even if he were a Sage, he would have no hope against Shigeto.

“Why don’t you give it a shot anyway? Maybe a miracle will happen. If you don’t want to, then how about this? I’ll pair you up with Hanakawa. I’ll keep the two of you as pets for breeding.”

Alice immediately grabbed the Philosopher’s Stones at her feet.

“Oh, come on! Am I truly so repulsive—what?!”

The stones transformed as she picked them up, merging together and turning into a single pink mass. Both Alice and Shigeto seemed confused by the development. As they stared in shock at the mass in Alice’s hands, it transformed into a baby and began wailing.

No one had expected that. But of everyone present, Hanakawa was the only one with a clue as to what had happened. It was Luu. The baby Luu had turned into a three-year-old child once given Yoshifumi’s Philosopher’s Stone, and then into a six-year-old when given Alice’s. The Philosopher’s Stones were parts of her body.

“Just what is going on here?” he mumbled.

As everyone was staring dumbly at the baby in confusion, there was an explosion beside them. A hole opened in one of the golden walls, and a number of people streamed through.

“Oh, look, it’s Hanakawa. See? I told you he’d be fine.”

Yogiri, Tomochika, Mokomoko, Hiruko, and Luu had burst through the wall of the throne room.

“Sir Takatou?! Did you perchance come to rescue me?!” Hanakawa looked up at Yogiri with desperate eyes.

Chapter 21 — Why Is She Talking like That?!

The sky was as red as blood, rumbling with thunder. At first, Yogiri was taken aback, but after thinking about it for a moment, he realized it didn't change much.

"Ah. Okay. It's not really a problem, but it's kind of scary, isn't it?"

"Anyway, that's the capital over there, yeah?" Hiruko said. "Let's go find what's-her-face."

Luu took them over to the capital. They arrived in the sky above the city in no time, but Yogiri couldn't help questioning the scene below them. They had seen a monster attacking and destroying the city with their own eyes. Despite that, there were no signs of damage. The streets were overflowing with people going about their business, as if nothing had happened here.

"The city was destroyed, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, this is strange. I wonder what happened?" Tomochika replied.

"Sounds good if we're looking for someone," Hiruko said. "Searching empty ruins wouldn't get us very far."

"I guess that's true—uhh, Luu?"

Luu was staring into space, frozen. It seemed like she was thinking hard about something. After a while, she pointed towards the center of the capital, where an especially large building stood, likely the emperor's palace.

"There's more of me over there."

"You mean another Philosopher's Stone?"

"Yeah. My body."

"What's going on? Is there another Sage here after all?"

"It just appeared suddenly," Luu said, tilting her head in confusion. It seemed she had felt it appear out of nowhere.

"Either way, won't know 'til we check, will we? We can't just leave Ma hanging while looking for someone!"

That was Hiruko and Luu's primary objective. Yogiri didn't have any

particular objections.

“Okay, let’s go grab the stone, then.” They started floating towards the castle, reaching it quickly. “In here?”

“Yeah, near the top.”

“Where’s the entrance?” Yogiri asked.

“Who cares?!”

Yogiri let out a short cry as they suddenly swung through the air, Hiruko taking over holding them up. They rushed towards the castle, ramming into the side. Luckily, they didn’t feel much of an impact. Whatever telekinesis was being used to hold them in the air also protected them. After a while, the dust caused by them crashing through the wall settled.

“Oh, look, it’s Hanakawa. See? I told you he’d be fine.”

They saw Hanakawa inside a gaudy, gold-encrusted room. He was on the floor on his hands and knees, staring up at them in shock.

“Sir Takatou?! Did you perchance come to rescue me?!”

“No, we just thought there was a Philosopher’s Stone here.”

“Of course...”

“So, what’s going on?”

There was another guy in the room, dressed entirely in gold. Two women lay prostrate on the ground, bowing to him, while another smaller girl stood at his side like some sort of attendant. Hanakawa was on his hands and knees. There was also the Sage girl from earlier, holding a loudly crying baby. Yogiri had no idea how any of these people were related, so he asked Hanakawa.

“Miss Alice brought me to the capital, where we thought we found Sir Yoshifumi, but it actually ended up being Sir Shigeto, who had acquired the Omega Blade and become omnipotent. As Miss Alice was unable to use her powers, Sir Shigeto provided her with some Philosopher’s Stones, which then transformed into a baby!”

“Okay, I have no idea what you’re talking about. So wait, that’s Shigeto?” Yogiri pointed at the arrogant-looking, gold-clad guy. He appeared to be Japanese and about the same age as Yogiri. Shigeto was a Japanese name as well, so it was hard to think of any other possibility.

“Takatou...do you not remember Mitadera?” Tomochika asked with a sigh.

“Oh, is he one of our classmates?”

“We were on the bus together.”

“Oh, I see. Anyway, first things first.” Yogiri stepped over to the girl Hanakawa had called Alice. “I bet you were surprised when it suddenly became a baby. You can’t use them as Philosopher’s Stones that way, so do you mind if I take her?”

“Huh? Uh. Sure.” Alice hesitantly handed the baby to Yogiri. At a complete loss, she simply did as she was told.

Yogiri stepped back over to Luu. “I can just give this to you, right?”

“Yeah.”

At Luu’s nod, he handed the baby over. It melted into something like a jelly before being absorbed into Luu’s hand, prompting another transformation. The six-year-old Luu grew, reaching a size appropriate for a twelve-year-old.

“Clothes! She needs clothes!” Tomochika shouted. “Takatou, I don’t know what’s going on, but you deal with it!”

Luu had only been wearing a large shirt before, so after growing so much, her underwear was in plain view. Tomochika hurriedly pulled the girl to the edge of the room, Hiruko following them for protection. That left Yogiri alone with Mokomoko.

“What is going on? What are you doing here, Takatou?” Shigeto must have been shocked to see them appear but finally called out to them.

“We’re collecting Philosopher’s Stones. You don’t need them, so you don’t mind if we take them, do you?”

“No, I do mind. Those stones were for that girl so that I could make her fight back.”

“Make her fight back? You’ve got some sick hobbies.”

Shigeto’s face was the picture of cruelty, making Yogiri feel a bit irritated.

“Well, whatever. She had given up anyway. Maybe I should try taking you on instead. You don’t know anything about me yet, so you’ll give me a fresh reaction.”

“Uhh, we don’t have a reason to fight you. You don’t need the Philosopher’s Stones, right?”

“We do have a reason. You made me angry. That’s enough to warrant the death penalty.”

“I feel like you’re losing your temper a bit too easily. Why don’t you try relaxing a little?”

“You seem awfully relaxed yourself. Is that because of your instant death ability?”

“Did Hanakawa tell you about it?” Yogiri asked, looking at their other classmate who was still on the floor.

“I did not speak a word of it! Well, perhaps I did, but I remember no such thing! And you never told me to keep it a secret anyway!”

“Die, Hanakawa.” At Shigeto’s words, Hanakawa fell flat. All strength left his body, dropping him to the floor with an idiotic expression on his face. He was definitely dead. “Instant death, huh? You seem awfully proud of it, but I can do it too with no effort at all.”

Yogiri didn’t remember ever acting proud of his power. He only used it when he had to, and he didn’t appreciate that Shigeto was trying to compete with him like that.

“Don’t kill people who have nothing to do with this. What if you regret it later?”

“Don’t worry. Revive him.” At Shigeto’s order, Hanakawa’s body jerked.

“Gyaaaaaaaah! Wha?! Huh? Wait, did I die? I was dead! I stopped breathing! What happened?!” Hanakawa was in a fluster. Judging by his behavior, it seemed dying and coming back to life was no walk in the park.

“See? Unlike you, I’m omnipotent. Bringing people back to life is easy. So I can decide if I regret it well after they’re dead. I can kill them and bring them back as much as I want. Until they realize just how far above them I am! Until they beg me to let them stay dead!”

“Man...you’ve got an awful personality.” It was hard to believe a guy like this could live an ordinary life. Yogiri couldn’t help but feel Shigeto’s new power had ruined him.

“Die, Takatou,” Shigeto said.

There was certainly power in the words. Yogiri could feel his own power reacting automatically to them. He didn’t fall, which was normal enough. But strangely, neither did Shigeto. After ordering his death, Shigeto just stood there and watched, waiting for Yogiri to collapse.

A fair amount of time passed. Nothing happened to either of them.

“What’s wrong? Omega Blade! I gave you an order!”

Shigeto was alive. It seemed like Yogiri’s power hadn’t been aimed at him.

“Did I say it wrong? Omega Blade! Kill Takatou! Tear him limb from

limb! Stop his heart! Make him explode!" Shigeto shouted, his expression turning desperate. But Yogiri didn't feel anything. There was no power behind the words anymore.

"I suppose the Omega Blade or whatever it is has been killed?" Mokomoko asked. But that seemed a little odd to Yogiri. Up until now, it had been the person who gave the order who would normally die.

"Navi! Where are you?! Explain! What's going on?! What's happening?! I'm supposed to be omnipotent! If there's a limit here, you should have explained it to me!"

Navi must have been the small girl at his side. She had been standing there a short while ago but had vanished at some point.

"Hmm. Perhaps this indicates that Mitadera was only being manipulated by someone else?"

"I see. That would make sense. If his will was being guided by the Omega Blade or whatever, it wouldn't count as him thinking for himself." In that case, it was natural that the Omega Blade died.

"What the... What the hell?! I wasn't being manipulated! I'm the master of the Omega Blade! I am the creator god of a new world!"

"Really? That sounds exactly like what someone who was being manipulated would say."

"Does this perhaps mean that Sir Shigeto no longer possesses any powers?" Hanakawa had stood up and walked over to Yogiri's side.

"You truly change your tune at terrifying speeds..." Mokomoko commented.

"I don't have any particular ill will towards Mitadera," Yogiri said. "I have my own business to take care of, so you can do whatever you want." He headed over to Tomochika. He had no intention of killing Shigeto, but there was no way he'd bother trying to get along with him now.

Luu had finished changing, having taken Tomochika's spare clothes. They were a little big on her, but at her current size it wasn't so much as to look uncomfortable.

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“Looks like these Philosopher’s Stones just keep dropping into our laps.”

“Well, praise be to me!” Hiruko declared proudly.

“Why is she talking like someone from Kansai?!” Tomochika cried out.

“You didn’t even do anything, Hiruko,” Yogiri added.

“So, what do we do now?” asked Hanakawa.

“I guess we head back to the port town? It doesn’t look like there are any clues about Euphemia here,” Yogiri replied.

They had thought the Overlord would be a clue to finding her, but there were no traces of the monster left. They would need to rethink things, which meant it was best to meet up with Carol and the others again.

“Let’s get moving then, yeah?” Everyone floated back up into the air around Hiruko, exiting through the hole in the wall.

Yogiri glanced back at the castle as they left. Alice was walking towards Shigeto. At the same time, the women bowing down in front of him had stood up and surrounded him. As he lost sight of them, he thought he could hear Shigeto screaming.

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Chapter 22 — Interlude: Looks like Our Next Job Is to Wipe Out All Life in This World

Zakuro, Haruto, and Euphemia descended into the hole where the castle once stood. Haruto used his wings to slow his descent, while the other two fell straight down, landing in a mountain of rubble.

As Haruto landed gracefully, the others pulled themselves out of the rubble. Naturally, they were unharmed. They were more than capable of floating in the air themselves, but it seemed it was too much of a bother. Haruto only kept himself from doing the same out of pride as a winged beastkin.

“Now then, where did the Overlord go?”

They were in a deep darkness. An enormous cave stretched out under the palace. It was large enough that even something as massive as the Overlord had no difficulty moving around.

“I hear something from that direction. It seems likely that is where it went,” Euphemia said.

The sound of crumbling, crushing, and screaming echoed from farther in. Zakuro headed towards them, Euphemia and Haruto close behind.

The enormous cavern ran deeper underground. As they walked, the light from above vanished, leaving them in a pitch black. But despite the darkness, none of the three had any difficulty navigating. Keeping track of their surroundings without sight was no challenge for them.

As they walked ever deeper, the sounds from below grew louder. It seemed like the source of the noise had been moving before, but now it was staying in one place. As they got closer, the presence of the Overlord grew stronger.

“Is there a second one?” Haruto mumbled. Something the same size as the Overlord was in the darkness, fighting it.

“Hmm. I think that is also the Overlord,” Zakuro said.

“So why is it fighting itself?”

“Who knows? There’s no way to know what it’s thinking.” To Haruto, it didn’t sound like those words held any respect at all. Zakuro seemed to have given up.

The two enormous monsters fought, coiling around each other, striking each other, ripping each other apart, bathing in each other’s blood. It was a truly bizarre battle.

“What do we do?”

“Nothing. They are both the Overlord, so we can’t help either of them.”

Haruto could do nothing but watch. The fight soon devolved into the two monsters biting each other. They were eating each other. Ripping off parts of their opponent, they were chewing and swallowing. As the lost chunks of their bodies regenerated, they took on increasingly warped forms. Eventually, it became impossible to distinguish between them.

As they ate each other, they slowly became a single entity. And over time, they grew smaller. They couldn’t regenerate infinitely, so as parts of them were eaten, they couldn’t all be restored.

Finally, there was an end to the seemingly endless cycle. A small, human figure was crouched down in the darkness.

“Goodness. What an annoying process,” Zakuro sighed with exasperation as he approached the figure.

“Hm...what was I...” The figure was smaller than Haruto and looked like a young girl.

“Overlord, have you awakened? Do you know what you were doing?”

“You are...Zakuro?”

“Yes. I’ve come to find you.”

Zakuro knelt down in front of the Overlord. Euphemia and Haruto followed suit.

“Where are we?”

“In the bottom world. More precisely, we are in a cavern beneath a castle on a small island on one of the planets in that world.”

“I am starting to remember! How dare they tie me down in a place like this!” Though it may have been rude to think so, her angry complaining seemed exactly like one would expect from a girl her size.

“Now then, since you have returned to your original form, we have no

more need to stay in this world. Shall we go?"

"What?" The girl named the Overlord seemed unhappy. "What are you talking about?! After meeting such a fate, how could I quietly return home?!"

"It doesn't have to be quietly. I think we can be rather brazen about it."

"Cease your jokes! After such humiliation, I will not be satisfied until I have had my revenge!"

"I understand, but the gods that sealed you away have died, thus allowing you to be freed. There is no one left for you to seek vengeance against."

"If the gods are gone, I will annihilate all life in the world they created! That should be enough to soothe my anger!"

"Overlord, do you not think you are being childish? This is not the behavior of a god."

"Shut up! Shut up, shut up, shut up! We're doing it! I've already made my decision! We're going to wipe out all life here! Or do you plan on disobeying me, Zakuro?!"

"If it is an order, then of course I will obey," Zakuro said, turning to Haruto and Euphemia. "I suppose that's it, then. Looks like our next job is to wipe out all life in this world."

Haruto couldn't help but sigh inwardly. It seemed the Overlord was a bit petty.

The Cult

The first day of the second semester.

“My name is Yogiri Takatou. Nice to meet you.”

Yogiri politely bowed his head from the front of the class. He was in a fifth grade classroom of a local elementary school. They had picked January 1 to be his birthday and decided he was ten years old. His actual date of birth was a mystery, so they guessed based on his appearance that he was around ten. From this day on, he would begin attending elementary school.

“Okay then, Takatou, please take a seat at that empty desk in the back.” His homeroom teacher was a young woman. She looked to be about the same age as Asaka, so she must have recently graduated from university.

Yogiri did as he was told, walking to the back of the classroom, where he tripped. His foot had caught on something. Looking back, he noticed someone had stuck their foot out into the aisle. A boy with an impudent smile was making a show of sticking out his leg.

“What are you, stupid? How do you trip over nothing like that?”

The classroom filled with laughter. It took Yogiri a moment to realize what had just happened. It seemed human society was rather complex. The various thoughts and expectations of different people all merged together to create a chaotic world. This being his first time in school, there were plenty of things he didn’t know, but he decided to be optimistic. Standing back up, he took his seat.

“Are you okay? It’s best not to get on Katayama’s bad side,” a girl called out to him from the side.

“Yeah, I’m not hurt at all.”

The boy who had tripped him, Katayama, seemed to be the leader of the class.

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“I still think it’s premature to send him off to school. Is there no way I can

persuade you?"

"Nope. I'm sick of being cooped up down there too."

They were in a two-story house that was a five-minute walk from the school. It was Yogiri's new home and thus Asaka's new workplace. Asaka was talking with her supervisor, Shiraishi, in the living room.

"Hmm. What if we took hostages, or tried to brainwash you?"

"Don't say such scary things so easily, please."

"I think it's worth pointing out that turning you into a mindless puppet would have been easy for us. And in fact, there was once a plan to do so."

"What did I just say about these kinds of scary things?!"

"But AΩ has taken quite a liking to you. That was what we had hoped would happen, but it seems to have gone too well. At this point, if we tried to do anything to take away your freedom..."

"Maybe I'm just being conceited, but I bet the whole Institute would be wiped out." Even worse, it could spell the end of the entire world.

"Anyway, we made the decisions that led here, so there's nothing to do but see it through. Here is your work phone."

"Wow, that's quite a bit better than my personal one."

"That device will allow you to keep track of AΩ's condition at all times, so please check it regularly."

"It can tell me where Yogiri is, huh? Oh, and those seals we talked about earlier. I'm surprised it can track those."

"AΩ's situation is a matter of the highest priority. We wasted no effort in developing these tools."

If Yogiri was going to interact with society at large, they needed some way to keep his power restrained. They couldn't risk him using it just because he was a little upset with someone. So they had asked Yogiri to lock away his own power. Luckily, it didn't seem like something that was especially difficult for him to do. All it meant was that it would take a little more time for him to use his abilities. It was more like the safety on a gun, preventing it from firing accidentally.

"For now, when it says his seal has been released, you can take that to mean he's trying to use his power. If that happens, do whatever you can to get to his side and stop him."

"Whatever I can? What would that even be?"

"Uhh...like, leveraging your relationship and love for each other?"

“Well, that’s awfully sappy.”

“If there was a better way, we would have tried it by now.” Shiraishi was feeling no small amount of anxiety.

“I’m sure Yogiri will have no trouble dealing with elementary school. He does seem a bit late getting home, though, doesn’t he?” Today was only the opening ceremony for the semester, so they had expected him to come right back.

Asaka checked the device Shiraishi had given her. It showed a map of the area around them and displayed Yogiri’s precise location. It looked like he was on the road home. Checking the status of his seals, all of the gates were still closed. The log didn’t show any changes, so there were no traces of his power having been used.

“GPS isn’t that accurate, though, is it?”

“There should be no inaccuracies in the data provided by that device.”

“More technology that’s not open to the public, huh?”

The technology that society had access to was only the tip of the iceberg. The dark side of the world concealed technology that could easily be mistaken for magic.

“There’s someone set to watch him at all times, so I’m sure he’ll be fine.” Yogiri was always under observation.

“I’m home!” Despite their worries, Yogiri’s voice at the front door put them all to rest. Asaka cut off her conversation with Shiraishi to go meet him.

“Welcome back. Wait, Yogiri! What happened to you?!”

Large bandages covered his knees and elbows, and he sported countless other scrapes and scratches. His face also looked swollen, distorting his appearance further.

“I got hit by a ball.”

“A ball did all that to you?!”

“The ball hit me and I fell over. I went to the nurse’s office and got first aid, though, so I think I’m okay.”

“Really? What on earth happened?”

“We were playing the invader game.”

“Invader game? That’s not some sort of video game, is it?”

Listening to Yogiri’s explanation, the game was simple. The players were divided into attackers and dodgers. The dodgers tried to get from one point to another while the attackers threw balls at them. When Yogiri had gone to

return home, the other boys in the class had invited him to play.

"What the heck is that?! Isn't that just bullying?!" It didn't seem like there was a way to win. It was just a large number of attackers throwing balls at a small number of dodgers.

"Maybe. I wondered if that was what was happening." Perhaps "luckily" wasn't the right word, but it seemed like Yogiri hadn't noticed.

"What do we do now? Should we complain to the school? But it was just between kids... But kids these days are so nasty. If we don't do anything, they might just escalate..."

"Don't worry, Asaka. I think we'll get along soon," Yogiri said.

"You think so? If this was all just for your first day, that would be fine..." If it was some sort of initiation ritual among the kids, maybe they didn't have to get so worked up about it. While it left her a little uneasy, she didn't know if it was a problem that warranted her intervention, so Asaka decided to wait and see for now.

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As if he had found his place in the class, there were no signs of Yogiri being bullied once classes started. Though he was poked fun at by many of the boys, having landed close to the bottom of their hierarchy, it seemed the girls had taken a liking to him and often stood up for him. The power balance of the class had settled, so once he started attending classes, there weren't any issues. Yogiri was also starting to acclimate to human society in general.

"Yogiri, here's your lunch box."

The school provided lunch for the students every day, so he rarely needed to take one, but when they went out on field trips, he occasionally needed one. Today, they were going on their fall excursion.

"Man, I don't have much experience making lunch boxes. It took a lot longer than I thought."

"Thanks!"

Taking the lunch box, Yogiri stuffed it into his bag and left the house. After heading to the designated meeting spot, he and Asaka walked to the school together, and then he headed to the classroom.

After their morning routine, the students got on a bus. Their seating was already decided, with Yogiri sitting near the front. The "boss" of the class,

Katayama, was reclining at the back of the bus. The closer you were to the back of the bus, the better.

"You look really excited, Yogiri. We're just going to the zoo, you know." A while after the bus departed, Emi Amano, the girl sitting beside Yogiri, spoke to him.

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“Yeah, I am excited.” For Emi and the others, it was a place they had been so many times, it was almost boring. But for Yogiri, it was one of the many places he’d be visiting for the first time.

“It would be a lot better if they had koalas and pandas.”

“But they have elephants and giraffes, right? I’ve never seen either of those before. So I’m looking forward to it.” The only animal he had really seen up close was his dog, Nikori. He had seen some enormous monsters before, but they weren’t really proper animals.

“I guess so. But you can see those in any zoo, can’t you?”

“And we’ll be able to pet the rabbits, right?”

“Rabbits? Well, yeah, I guess they’re kind of cute.”

While they were talking, the bus left the city behind, entering an area full of nature. They began traveling up a gently winding, sloped road, meaning they were likely heading up a mountain.

“Huh? Is this the right way?” Emi asked, looking confused.

“Isn’t the zoo up the mountain?” Yogiri’s impression was that a zoo would be in a place with lots of nature around it, so he didn’t think it was strange at all.

“No. It’s a little far, but it’s in the city. Maybe this is a shortcut.” Since they weren’t heading in the wrong direction, she found a way to convince herself of that.

But the bus ended up stopping in a clearing halfway up the mountain. Yogiri hadn’t heard about them taking any breaks, so this all seemed unplanned.

“Okay, everyone, we’re getting off the bus now.” Their homeroom teacher, Haruka Yamaguchi, spoke as if everything were perfectly normal.

“Miss Haruka! This isn’t the zoo!” Emi called out.

“Our plans have changed,” the teacher responded with a smile. It wasn’t her usual honest and gentle smile, but one that clearly said it would allow no refusal. The kids must have thought it was strange, but there was nothing they could do but get off the bus as they were told.

Their bus was the only one in the large parking lot. As the thirty children in their class stepped out, people in white clothes surrounded them. White cloth concealed their faces, hiding their identities, but it appeared the group was a mix of men and women.

“Please come this way, everyone.” The teacher acted like everything was

perfectly normal. She was connected to these people in some way. Of course, the driver was also working with them.

"What's going on?! I don't get it! Where are we going?!" Katayama shouted.

Smiling all the while, Miss Yamaguchi stepped up to Katayama's side.

"Come on, Haruka! Explain what we're doing!" the class leader yelled again.

The teachers at school always stepped carefully around Katayama. His parents held considerable power, which he put to use as much as he could. Normally, their homeroom teacher was no different, cowering in front of him like all the others. Most days, she would have spilled everything the moment he told her to talk. But this time, she kicked him, planting the tips of her pumps deep in his stomach.

"Please be quiet. Mother has decided everything."

Katayama dropped to the ground, motionless. The teacher picked him up and slung him over her shoulder effortlessly, displaying a strength they never would have guessed from her usual behavior.

None of the other kids dared to disobey her after that.

◇ ◇ ◇

The children were brought from the parking lot to a nearby shrine. Inside, they were put in cells underground. It seemed like a natural cave, with the cells constructed from wooden grates. Since it was just made of wood, there might have been a way for them to break out, but the children weren't in a position to be doing anything. They were all in a state of confusion, not a small number of them brought to tears.

"Don't worry, everyone. Someone will come and save us." Yogiri tried to calm them down.

"Really?! Really?! They will?!"

"Yeah."

"Are you sure?! Are you absolutely sure they'll come?"

"Yeah. Probably."

Emi clung to Yogiri's side. A number of the other girls had crowded around him as well. They must have all felt Yogiri was the most dependable one there, being the only one still calm. Normally, Katayama would have had

words to say about him hanging out with the girls, but for now he was quiet. He had recovered from the physical pain, but the mental damage must have been pretty severe. He was curled up in the corner on his own.

I'm pretty sure the people at the Institute know where I am.

They used some sort of magic to track his position, so it didn't matter if this place blocked electromagnetic waves. They should be able to find him even in a cave like this. They would almost certainly come and save him, but he had no idea when. Of course, he wouldn't tell the others that. He had been told to keep his powers and situation a secret.

Emi let out a quiet yelp at the sound of footsteps approaching. It was their teacher, now wearing the same white clothes as the other adults with them. Though her outfit looked similar, it was a little different. Hers had a bit more decoration on it. If these people were all part of an organization, it seemed she was a bit higher ranked than the others.

"Hello, everyone," she called out in a bright voice, but no one answered.

"Miss...Yamaguchi..." Katayama managed to squeeze out.

"Oh, what is it, Katayama? Normally, you're so much more frank."

"Did you do this...because I always...cause problems for you?"

"Cause problems? For me? Ah, I see! You think that's all it's been! Yes, you've caused me all sorts of problems. I've dreamed about killing you plenty of times."

"Then...please, let everyone else..."

"Oh, my, my, my! Are you trying to take all the responsibility yourself so everyone else can go free? Is that what you're trying to say? That's great! Even though you're always such a little tyrant! It's just like Gian from the Doraemon movie! I'm impressed! You've really moved me! I never expected something like that from you, of all people!"

The students were silent. Even the quiet sobs had stopped, all eyes glued to their teacher.

"Really, it makes me want to forgive you! If stressful situations bring out a person's true character, then that makes you quite the man, willing to sacrifice your life to save everyone else! I bet if we let you go home, you'd totally change and start working hard to help everyone around you!"

"Then, please let us—"

"But too bad. This isn't something I decided. It's really too bad. If it were up to me, I'd let you all go right away! But this is all according to Mother's

will! Mother has chosen you! It's really quite an honor!" Haruka shouted, voice brimming with emotion. The children realized at that point that there was no talking to her. Whoever this Mother was, Haruka would do whatever she said.

"Miss Yamaguchi?"

"Oh, what is it, Takatou?"

"Why us? Is it because I'm here?"

"I have no idea. Mother is the only one who knows. We inferior beings couldn't hope to understand what she is thinking!"

Yogiri thought he was specifically being targeted. He was no Katayama, but he felt like if they'd be satisfied with him, they might let the others go free. But it seemed their teacher hadn't taken any particular notice of him.

As Yogiri thought over the situation, the people in white came again and unlocked the cell door.

"Now, let's get going, everyone."

They blocked one side of the cave. The children filed out of the cell, walking deeper into the ground with hollow eyes. The people in white held weapons, wickedly sharp blades that would have no problem slicing apart children like them. One glimpse of those weapons was enough to stamp out any thoughts of fighting back.

As they walked through the cave, they came upon a wide cavern. Bonfires set up throughout the cavern made it brighter than the rest of the cave behind them. The smell of blood filled the air, and something seemed to be drawn in the center of the room. It looked like a magic circle made of blood, with various entrails placed around it. Although they didn't know if it meant anything, none of the children missed its sinister nature. One of them threw up, starting a chain reaction throughout the class. But even that disgusting addition to the cavern seemed more like decoration.

The people in white took positions around the chamber and began chanting and making noise. At some point, a metal grate had come down to seal the entrance. The people who had herded them there had vanished. Others involved in some sort of ritual had taken their place.

Miss Yamaguchi walked alone to an altar deeper in the cavern. In a loud voice, she began chanting in a language they didn't understand. As if that was some sort of signal, darkness began to spill out of the magic circle. The inky blackness blocked out all light, flowing out and taking shape, forming

countless long, slender arms. The hands crept about the cavern, as if looking for something, grabbing onto anything they came into contact with. They found the people in white, grabbing them and lifting them up into the air. Screams echoed throughout the cavern.

A large dark mass emerged from the circle. It was a face. The numerous red lights on it must have been eyes. The white spikes lined up on it must have been teeth. The face opened its mouth wide, throwing the worshipers inside. The sound of crunching from within caused a number of the children to collapse. It was hard to imagine any of them staying sane after seeing such a spectacle.

As it devoured the adults, the darkness grew steadily larger. As if there were some proper order for these things, it made no move to reach for the children. It just continued to eat the people in white. But what would happen once they were all gone? None of the children were so optimistic as to think it would spare them.

Before long, their teacher was the only one left, and the blackness's entire body had emerged. It was a huge shadow with countless arms. Its head close to the top of the cavern, it stared down at the children.

"Nooooo! I can't take this!" Emi screamed at Yogiri's side.

"Help...somebody help..." Katayama's legs gave out under him, and he dropped onto his rear. Any sense of bravado was long gone. All that was left was trembling and crying.

"You have seen the others being eaten, but that was all in order according to Mother's will," Haruka said as the black monster seemed to have calmed down. "Now then, you're all next. There is a proper order, still, so please quietly wait your turn. Unfortunately, Katayama is last. First up is going to be Amano."

The monster looked at Emi, who dropped to the floor, hyperventilating. "Why...why...why?"

I figured someone would come to save us, Yogiri thought. But if he waited, some of them would die. Hesitantly, he undid one of the seals on his power. Opening the first gate, he enabled the use of Phase 1. He would now be able to use his power at will.

The shadow monster laughed, slowly reaching a hand towards Emi.

"Die." Yogiri pointed at the shadow and unleashed his power. The outline of the creature vanished. Turning into a black mist, it dissipated before

vanishing entirely.

"Huh?" Miss Yamaguchi blurted out.

"What? What was that, Takatou?"

Emi looked up at Yogiri. The rest of the class was sprawled across the ground, crouching down, sitting, or holding their heads in their hands. Yogiri was the only one still standing. Unafraid of anything, he was looking forward. His power wasn't something that could be seen. But it was clear to everyone watching that he had done *something*.

"What is happening? What about Mother's plan? What happened to the god? Takatou, you—"

Before she could say anything more, someone tackled her to the ground. The unit dispatched to protect Yogiri had broken into the chamber.

◇ ◇ ◇

The Institute's rescue team managed to secure all of the children safely, and immediately sent them off to the hospital. Though none of them were injured, the majority were showing signs of PTSD. Yogiri alone seemed okay, but it was unclear when classes would resume again.

"How exactly did Yogiri end up in a situation that made him need to use his power?"

"Well, we were trying to be careful, but I never would have expected such a large-scale plot like this," Shiraishi said apologetically.

They were in a meeting room at the Institute. Asaka and Yogiri had ended up being sent back.

"You said he always had guards, right? And that there was always someone with him?"

"Yes, but they were wiped out on the mountain. I can't say they let their guard down, but they were defeated. It seemed our opponent was one step ahead of us."

"And they weren't actually targeting Yogiri?"

"It doesn't seem that way. If they had been, our response may have been faster."

"The Cult, huh?"

"Yes. It's a religious organization centered around a figure known only as 'Mother,' operating in the shadows across the world. Their goal is to

precipitate the advent of a new god that they might serve, so they do all sorts of nasty things in the process."

"And Yogiri's teacher was one of their members just by chance?"

"That's how it looks."

"And there are members of this Cult all over the place? This was just an attempt at mass murder. The authorities can't let them get away with that, can they?"

"The problem with that is the Cult has connections throughout the dark side of the world."

"Again with this 'dark side of the world' stuff!"

"They have members in leadership positions across numerous countries, so it's not possible to root them out by ordinary means. Even the homeroom teacher was released from police custody after being questioned."

"What?! How?! She was the one behind it all, wasn't she?!"

"Yes, well. She insisted that she was abducted along with the rest of the class. And since all of the other cultists were killed, there's no evidence linking her to them. I find it hard to believe she'll find work at an elementary school ever again, though."

"We had the Agency and now the Cult. Can't you do something about them already?"

The Agency was an organization that had once kidnapped Asaka and was apparently involved in locking away dangerous beings like Yogiri. The dark side of the world seemed to house a never-ending supply of these organizations.

"Ha ha, we'll do our best, although honestly, we're already doing everything we can..."

This incident had likely alerted the Cult to Yogiri's presence. He hadn't been their objective this time, but they were an organization dedicated to the creation of a new god. It wouldn't be strange for them to take an interest in him, so the Institute would need to tighten security around him once again.

"But you didn't even know that Yogiri's teacher was a member of the Cult, did you?"

"We looked into her as much as we could. But any investigation into matters relating to the Cult comes with a fair share of danger..."

"Well, I'll leave that matter to you, so make sure you do your best."

Asaka stood up, heading to another meeting room where Yogiri was

waiting.

"I'm back."

"Welcome back, Asaka."

Yogiri was sitting at one of the desks, studying on his own. Despite the incident, his appetite for learning hadn't abated. Asaka couldn't help but feel relieved.

"Next time, we'll look into your school a bit more. It might get a bit too stiff for you, but we're not going to stop you from going."

"Okay..." But something seemed to be on Yogiri's mind as an unpleasant expression rose to his face.

"That incident wasn't because you were there or anything. In fact, if you hadn't been there, no one in your class would have made it out alive."

"Really?"

"Really. Of course, we can't tell everyone that you're the one who saved them."

"Do you think everyone will be okay?"

"I don't know about right away, but hopefully you'll be able to meet them all again."

"Yeah."

Once all these shadowy organizations were gone, Yogiri might be able to live a peaceful life. Asaka hoped they could create a world like that someday.

Afterword

Volume nine! Man, writing for this long has been really difficult! You may think there are plenty of series that make it to nine volumes, but isn't it amazing to get this far when all of the enemies die instantly?

"The instant death cheat failed!" "The protagonist is in trouble!" "What will happen?!" "Do your best, protagonist!" Developments like that almost never happen, yet the story keeps going. As the author, I'm even more surprised.

That being said, we have a new development! It's a new series! Okay, not really, but we are getting closer to the end of the story. I hope you choose to stick with me until the end.

I always scratch my head over what I'm supposed to write in these afterwords, but this time I only have to write two pages, so it looks like it'll be over before I know it. I'm still not really sure how to write afterwords well. I could write about what's going on in my life, but there's nothing all that interesting to talk about. I enjoy reading the afterwords other people write, but I find it quite hard to write them myself.

And so, my thanks.

For my editor. I'm sorry for leaving everything to the last minute like always. Thank you for all your hard work again.

For the illustrator, Chisato Naruse. Thank you for your wonderful illustrations. Sorry for being so slow with everything this time.

It seems I'm just apologizing for all my scheduling issues again, but I really am going to try hard to fix it for next time!

Next is volume ten, which means we've made it to double digits! Thank you for your continued support!

Tsuyoshi Fujitaka

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Hello, this is the illustrator, Chisato Naruse.

About the character's outfits...
I am always told "it would be a waste to have them wear the same outfit as last time, so let's give them a change of clothes," but I never really get any guidance as to what kind of clothes to give them.
Considering the personalities of Tomochika and Enju (or rather Mokomoko inside of Enju), I imagine they wouldn't choose to wear very cutesy clothing in places where there aren't many people around, so I've been drawing them with shorts rather than skirts. In general, I'm concerned their clothing is trending away from being cute.

That said, I enjoyed making the illustrations for this volume, as always. I hope to see you again in volume 10.

Chisato Naruse

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Bonus Short Story

Question Corner 4

Tomochika: Okay, hello! My name is Tomochika Dannoura, and welcome to Question Corner 4! Yes, this is the fourth time we've done this!
Mokomoko: You may think answering questions like this is easy for us, but it is no less work than doing anything else!
Yogiri: Who is that complaint supposed to be from?
Tomochika: Uhh, normally Mokomoko is always speaking in italics, but today she's using Enju's body!
Mokomoko: I am not sure what difference that makes, considering my body is not visible to them!
Tomochika: Okay then, we've done this three times already, so I think you guys know how this goes, but just in case, I'll explain. In this section, we'll be answering questions from readers! So, let's get right to the first one!

Q: Good evening, Tomo! I've started to develop a neurosis around my baby crying at night preventing me from sleeping. How did things end up this way? These days I can't help but get irritated whenever I see its face.

Hami

Tomochika: Okay, so that wasn't related to the story at all. Actually, was there even a question?!
Yogiri: Maybe they were looking for advice?
Tomochika: Even so! Don't you think asking high schoolers about how to raise kids is a bit off the mark?
Yogiri: Then let's ask Mokomoko since she has experience. Wait, didn't you say you *didn't* have any experience raising children?
Mokomoko: I cannot say I am totally without experience. But the vast majority of tasks were left up to the wet nurse. Even if I was not all that important, I was technically nobility!

Tomochika: So you're useless then.
Mokomoko: Even without experience myself, I have the plentiful wisdom and scientific knowledge collected by humanity over time!
Tomochika: And how is technology going to help with babies crying at night?
Mokomoko: Hmm. There has been research on the sleep habits of young babies. According to these studies, babies have a pattern of constantly falling asleep and waking, and in fact during the night, their sleep is rather light, causing them to easily awaken. In short, they are effectively nocturnal. That is why they cause such a fuss at night.
Yogiri: I see. So?
Mokomoko: The solution is simple. If you cannot sleep at night, give up! Sleep during the day instead!
Tomochika: That's ridiculous!
Yogiri: Please don't take our answer seriously. If you need help raising children, find something more serious like a government program.

Q: Yo, Tomochii!
These days, kids have started asking me where babies come from a lot. How do you think I should answer them?
I'm looking for a witty, colorful way of answering.

Yanma

Tomochika: Again, why are you asking high school students?! Could you find someone a bit more qualified, please?!
Yogiri: Maybe humanity's accumulated wisdom can help us here too?
Mokomoko: In situations like this, it is best not to attempt to obfuscate the truth. A serious, straightforward answer is best.
Tomochika: Uh, well, we don't know how old these kids are, right? I don't know if it's appropriate to tell them about stuff like that.
Mokomoko: No, it is fine to explain things as they are. It is most important not to shy away from something simply due to its erotic nature. You must simply explain the facts. Sperm fertilizes an egg, which embeds itself in the mother and begins the process of cell division. One must only alter their language to be understandable for the child in question.
Yogiri: Are these the kind of questions we were hoping for here?

Tomochika: I get the feeling they were hoping for a very different kind of answer!
Yogiri: But why are we getting all kinds of questions about raising children?
Tomochika: Maybe because last time, we talked about a certain mother running away.
Mokomoko: At any rate, it still serves as a topic of discussion. Though with that in mind, these are questions all parents face, so there are plentiful numbers of books published discussing such matters! I recommend investigating them for yourselves!
Yogiri: So your answer is "go read a book"?
Tomochika: What's the point of the Question Corner, then?!
Mokomoko: Well...to be blunt, anything that fills the page is sufficient!
Tomochika: Okay, that's *way* too blunt!
Yogiri: And that's all we have time for today. Apparently we're taking requests for advice in addition to questions now, so please feel free to send in any you have.

Question Corner 4: Bonus Section

Tomochika: Okay, hello! I'm Tomochika Dannoura! This is the bonus section for Question Corner 4. We couldn't fit all of the questions into one bonus section, so we've made a second one here!
Mokomoko: As such, let us get straight to the questions. Ah, by the way, I am using Enju's body this time!
Tomochika: Not that anyone can see you!

Q: Dear Mr. Yogiri. In order to add some more fanservice, could I request that you kill the clothes of the person sitting next to you? Also, if you were to use your power to kill the Question Corner, what would happen to the next bonus section?

Nao

Yogiri: Even if I killed Dannoura's clothes, it's not like there would be an insert image for it...
Tomochika: So you would do it if there were?!

Yogiri: I'm joking.
Tomochika: So, what about killing the Question Corner, then? I don't really understand the question, but go ahead.
Yogiri: It would just mean there's no Question Corner next time, wouldn't it?
Mokomoko: Such a thing would be rather troubling for us!
Tomochika: We need something for these side stories, so please don't do it!

Q: Yogiri Takatou, I have a question for you as a friend. I am a firm believer that the bigger the boobs, the better. When it comes to your personal tastes, do you prefer boobs that are bigger than Dannoura's? By the way, I think boobs are filled with "dreams" and "love." If possible, I would love to hear your opinion.

Yume Nitto

Yogiri: Hmmm. I wouldn't necessarily say that bigger is always better. While I do prefer them larger, there's always a limit...
Tomochika: I don't think you have to take the question that seriously! Isn't a question like this no good?!
Yogiri: The issue is really who the boobs belong to. If they got bigger or smaller over time, that wouldn't really change my opinion of them much.
Tomochika: Uh, actually, I'd rather you didn't pay that much attention to my chest...
Yogiri: Also, I'm pretty sure they're just full of fat.
Tomochika: Hey!
Mokomoko: While that is indeed true, I believe an answer that permits one to dream may be more suitable...
Tomochika: And that's the end of the bonus section! The other bonuses are all similar, so if you enjoyed this one, please take a look at those as well! Please send us your questions any time!

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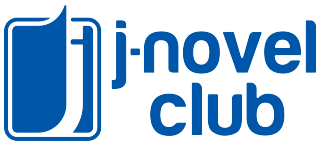

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My Instant Death Ability Is So Overpowered, No One in This Other World Stands a Chance Against Me! Volume 9
by Tsuyoshi Fujitaka

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Edited by Tess Nanavati

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